

CINEFANTASTIQUE

January

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MARS ATTACKS!



Playing the Tim Burton
card to outsmart
INDEPENDENCE DAY

Volume 28 Number 7



PLUS: DIRECTOR WES CRAVEN ON "SCREAM"

CINEFANTASTIQUE



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"The Magazine with a Sense of Wonder"

JANUARY 1996

Merry Christmas from Tim Burton! And let's not forget Season's Greetings from horror master Wes Craven. Both genre auteurs have picked December for the release of their latest horror and science fiction efforts. Quipped Burton about the mirthful mayhem on view in *MARS ATTACKS!* being at odds with the holidays, at least the color scheme is Christmasy—"red planet, green death ray!" The color on view in Craven's *SCREAM* is mostly red, blood red. If it seems an odd time to release movies that massacre their casts, one can only note that the Christmas release strategy worked wonders for *THE EXORCIST* in 1973.

West Coast editor Steve Biodrowski provides this issue's cover story on the making of Burton's *MARS ATTACKS!*, interviewing Burton, producer Larry Franco, screenwriter Jonathan Gems, production designer Wynn Thomas, composer Danny Elfman and star Rod Steiger. Also included is a look back at the infamous Topps bubblegum cards that inspired the film, and the amazing CGI effects work by ILM which convinced Burton to abandon his ideas for the use of stop-motion invaders. Coming in the wake of the huge commercial success of *INDEPENDENCE DAY*, with a remarkably similar storyline, Burton's comedy seems to be playing Stanley Kubrick's *DR. STRANGELOVE* to Sidney Lumet's *FAIL SAFE*—two superlative A-bomb Armageddon stories that shared screens back in 1964. It's unlikely audiences will confuse the two pictures!

For our coverage of Wes Craven's return to slasher film territory, inspired by the original *HALLOWEEN*, San Francisco correspondent Lawrence French spent several days on the set, observing Craven in action. French provides a lengthy interview with the director, as well as screenwriter Kevin Williamson and star Neve Campbell, who gives the Jamie Lee Curtis victim role a new '90s slant. Reported French from the set, *SCREAM* appears to be Craven's most assured shocker in years.

Happy Holidays!

Frederick S. Clarke



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EAGERLY AWAITED

STAR WARS (Fox)

Two decades after breaking box office records with his third (and so far last) directing effort, George Lucas has finally announced that he will direct the first installment of the next STAR WARS trilogy, which is scheduled to begin production in the fall. In the meantime, eager fans will have to content themselves with the re-release of the original, which has been revamped and enhanced with new digital effects. One may quibble over tampering with a classic—not to mention trying to improve special effects that were good enough to win an Oscar the first time around—after all, look at what happened to CLOSE ENCOUNTERS OF THE THIRD KIND. But that's not enough to dampen our enthusiasm for seeing this truly exciting science-fiction adventure back on the big screen, where it belongs. Then it's THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK on February 21, and RETURN OF THE JEDI on March 15—a space opera feast!

January 31



RELEASE SCHEDULE

Upcoming cinefantastique at a glance, along with a word or two for the discriminating viewer.

compiled by Jay Stevenson
(unless otherwise noted)

BEAVIS AND BUTT-HEAD DO AMERICA (Paramount) December 20

The hilarious misadventures of the metal-head misfits continue on the big screen in this animated comedy based on the popular MTV series. This time, the two television addicts actually get off the couch and out into the world. We're sure MTV hopes this will be a bigger success than their last animated effort to become a big screen adaptation: JOE'S APARTMENT. SEE PAGE 56.

BREAKING THE WAVES (October) Now Playing (limited)

Having opened in New York and Los Angeles on November 15, this award winning film from Lars Von Trier (THE KINGDOM) is now moving into other art house venues. Although the genre element is minimal, the film is still worth checking out if it comes to your city.

CRASH (Fine Line) February/March

Although U.S. audiences still have to wait, David Cronenberg's new effort opened to impressive business in his native Canada late last year, filling theatres booking the film on a limited/exclusive basis. SEE CFQ 28:3

HAMLET (Columbia) December 25

Director and star Kenneth Branagh has assembled an outstanding cast of European and American actors for his new, feature film of Shakespeare's classic tragedy, which (lest we forget) is partially a ghost story. Branagh's adaptation contains the complete text of the play, which is usually truncated in big-screen filmizations. Co-starring are Brian Blessed, Julie Christie, Billy Crystal, Gerard Depardieu, Charlton Heston, Derek Jacobi, Jack Lemmon, Robin Williams, and Kate Winslet.



MARS ATTACKS (Warners) December 13

"I think we're all curious about how the Martians are going to look in the environment we designed for them," said production designer Wynn Thomas. "I wish I could say it's going to look this way or that way, but I

have to wait. Intellectually, I know how it's going to look, but I don't know how it will feel to viewers. To me movies are also an emotional experience—in a good picture, an audience has an emotional experience. Whether or not it will work that way, I don't really know yet." SEE PAGE 16.

MICHAEL (New Line) December 25

John Travolta stars as an alcoholic fallen angel in this comedy directed by Nora Ephron (still coasting on the reputation of SLEEPLESS IN SEATTLE, despite the recent flop of MIXED NUTS). Andie MacDowell and William Hurt co-star. SEE PAGE 54.

THE PREACHER'S WIFE (Touchstone) December 20

In this new romantic comedy from director Penny Marshall (BIG), Whitney Houston stars as the gospel-singing wife of Reverend Henry Biggs (Courtney B. Vance), a good man who is doubting his ability to make a difference in his troubled community and home. But, not to despair; help is on the way in the form of angel Dudley (Denzel Washington) who soon becomes both the source of and the solution to their problems. Samuel Goldwyn Jr. produced this remake of his father's classic, THE BISHOP'S WIFE. SEE PAGE 52.

SCREAM (Dimension) December 20

In this psychological thriller, directed by Wes Craven and written by Kevin Williamson, the small California town of Santa Rosa comes under siege from a murderer who takes all of his cues from the movies. The young people he targets can only survive if they have the presence of mind to follow movie rules: Don't answer the door. Don't hide in the closet. Don't just stand there. Don't go back in the house. Don't trip. Don't answer the phone. Don't ask, "Who's there?" Don't have sex. Don't drink or do drugs. And whatever you do, never, ever, under any circumstances, scream. SEE PAGE 32.

WHOLE WIDE WORLD (Sony Classics) December 20 (limited)

Based on the memoir *One Who Walked Alone* by Novahlyne Price Ellis, this biographical film examines the short life of 1930s' pulp-fiction writer Robert E. Howard, creator of Conan the Barbarian, Solomon Kane, and Kull the Conqueror. SEE PAGE 48.

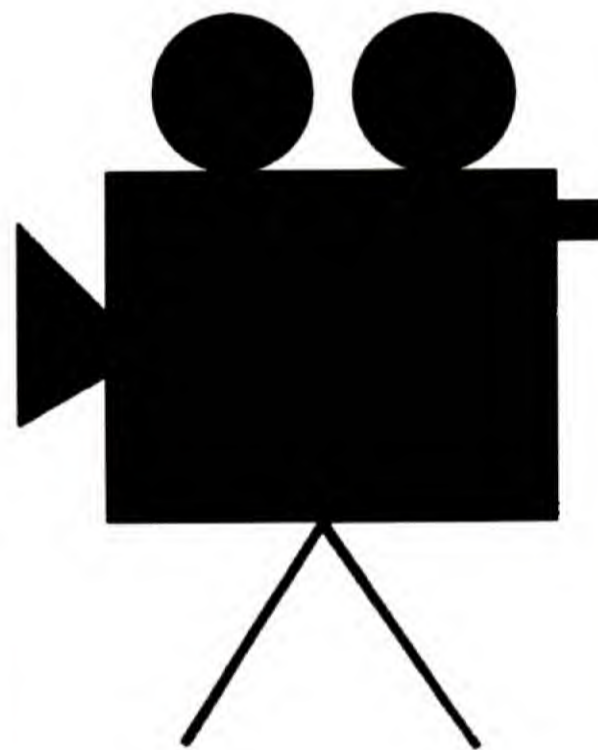
ROOM TO BREATHE

THE RELIC (Paramount)

We originally expected this film to open on August 23, but Paramount insists that it was not pushed back. "Any early list showing a firm date is wrong," studio vice chairman Barry London told the L.A. Times. "We thought about mid-August but looked at the Olympics and felt the movie had a better chance on January 17. This kind of movie needs time to breathe." Well, maybe so, but this is the same studio that gave us THINNER after several months' delay. This \$50-million monster in a museum movie was produced by Gale Ann Hurd, who most recently gave us THE GHOST AND THE DARKNESS. Tom Sizemore and Penelope Ann Miller star for director Peter Hyams, in this adaptation of the novel by Douglas Preston and Lincoln Child. Stan Winston's effects studio provided the monster and the mayhem it causes, including numerous headless victims. "The creature eats their head, sucks out some kind of vital element," said makeup man Robert Hall. "Basically, I did all the gory stumps for the bodies, painted all the silicone hands and body parts, and did a lot of the silicone construction, which is something I had started on THE GHOST AND THE DARKNESS. We were making bodies for that and THE RELIC back-to-back; it was basically a big pile of mutilated people for two different films."

Douglas Eby

January 17



HOLLYWOOD GOTHIC

AN AMERICAN WEREWOLF IN PARIS

With apologies to George Gershwin.

by Alan Jones

Rumors of a sequel were often circulated—was it going to be AN AMERICAN WEREWOLF IN LONDON II or AN AMERICAN WEREWOLF IN PARIS?—and speculation ran rife when it was confirmed by Polygram Filmed Entertainment (the backers of the original film) that John Landis was indeed writing a continuation. However, although Landis and Marco Brambilla (DEMOLITION MAN) were both mentioned as director possibilities, nothing ever happened. Until now.

Director Anthony Waller has put the sequel on the production fast-track thanks to the industry buzz and critical acclaim of his debut feature, last year's blackly comic thriller MUTE WITNESS. Waller actively relished the thought when he and his MUTE WITNESS producer, Richard Claus, were approached as a director-producer team-for-hire to take over AN AMERICAN WEREWOLF IN PARIS last February. Waller recalled, "We were offered it by Propaganda, a subsidiary of Polygram, who had been developing the project for over six years with three different teams of writers. They'd spent over \$1 million to get a possible sequel absolutely nowhere at all. They were never happy with any script draft to put out on the market place."

Waller reporter, "I never read that Landis script, although John did relate the whole story to me personally one evening. He seemed highly enthusiastic about it and was rather put out that Polygram thought he'd just written anything to fob them off and get the money owed to him. Polygram didn't think he was serious about the concept—which, of course, he was."

However, Waller elected to go off on his own tangent with the sequel. "I'm messing about with the whole werewolf idiom primarily because I'm competing with the John Landis original," he said. "Actually, not the Landis original—more the impression it has made on the memory. I had a stunning impres-



Fifteen years after the release of John Landis' AN AMERICAN WEREWOLF IN LONDON (above) a sequel has been completed. Landis was not involved.

sion of it. Then, when we were first approached with the sequel idea, I saw it again for the first time since 1981, and I was disappointed. Yet I remember it so well, so freshly. I don't think many people will have seen it since then either, and competing with their heightened memory of it is even tougher. Anything that reaches cult status suddenly becomes taboo to fiddle with, the 'It's a classic, leave it alone' mentality. And that's precisely the reason

I've taken the story off into different tangents. I viewed AN AMERICAN WEREWOLF IN LONDON as just the beginning—a starting point that opened up a whole new realm of unique entertainment, mixing horror, suspense, comedy and terror. It's an area that hasn't been explored enough since Landis did it the first time around, and you wouldn't be able to do that again unless you went off in a completely different direction yourself." □

Short Notes

David Cronenberg, whose CRASH is due to open soon, has inked a deal to direct his next film for Paramount, with **Scott Rudin** (THE ADDAMS FAMILY) producing. The project is titled CRIMES OF THE FUTURE (also the title of an early Cronenberg experimental feature). The story revolves around a man investigating "crimes" that are not illegal, because they are so advanced that new laws have yet to be written against them. ♪ **Francis Ford Coppola** has set up his next genre project at Hollywood Pictures, which handled JACK, his hit summer fantasy starring Robin Williams. The new film is to be called MIRROR. **Matthew Jacobs**, who wrote Fox-TV's recent DR. WHO revival, will script the epic, science-fiction story set 100 years in the future. ♪ Speaking of Coppola, last year *Daily Variety* reported that he would team up with **Oliver Stone** and **Tim Burton** to create an HBO-TV series based on WEIRD TALES, the seminal pulp magazine. However, when *Cinefantastique* questioned Burton on the topic during post-production on MARS ATTACKS, he denied any knowledge of the project. ♪ When last we heard, **Roland Emmerich** and **Dean Devlin** were headed to Japan to seek Toho Studio's approval for their Americanized remake of GODZILLA. □

CONAN, TV BARBARIAN

by James Van Hise

In April 1996, a double-page spread in *Variety* announced that Keller Entertainment (clearly inspired by the on-going success of HERCULES and XENA) had made a deal to produce a syndicated CONAN TV series. At present there is a two-hour pilot script written by Steve Hayes, the head of project development for the company, but nothing has been filmed yet. Hayes stated, "We've gotten enormous response to this—far more than with any of the other shows we've got. So there isn't a problem of getting the money, it's a question of who do we want to get backing us."

Even though a lot of groundwork has already been done for the series, CONAN will not premiere until 1998. "We intend to write all the scripts first so we know exactly where we want to shoot them," Hayes continued. "We have a window from the middle to late next year [1997] before we will shoot. A lot will depend on how well the scripts come out. But nothing is written in stone, even up to five minutes before something is finally shot. Our goal at the moment is to go to Mexico, where we shoot our ACAPULCO HEAT series, and find locations down there where they did the second CONAN movie. Originally we thought of possibly going to Europe, but we still haven't made our minds up about that."

Conan, created by pulp writer Robert E. Howard, cut a successful swash through paperbacks and comic books in the 1960s, before helping to establish the screen career of Arnold Schwarzenegger in John Milius' CONAN THE BARBARIAN (1982) and Richard Fleischer's CONAN THE DESTROYER (1985). The actor slated to play the role in the series is Rolf Muller, a friend of Schwarzenegger's.

Regarding which version of Conan the TV series will use, Hayes explained, "The version will be a hybrid of Arnold's interpretation and the Milius interpretation in the first CONAN—that and what we absorbed after reading the books. We then made a bible of our own, which I wrote, and out of that bible will come the way we want to go. But it's too early to give concrete answers on all of that." □

PRINCE VALIANT

The Arthurian comic strip fantasy of swords & sorcery comes to the screen.

by Alan Jones

Filmed on locations in North Wales in the United Kingdom, and at the Babelsberg Studios in Berlin, *PRINCE VALIANT* marks the biggest budget feature film yet from director Anthony Hickox (*WAXWORK*, *HELLRAISER III*, *WARLOCK: THE ARMAGEDDON*). British-born Hickox, son of director Douglas Hickox (*THEATER OF BLOOD*), co-wrote the script with producer, Carsten Lorenz—who, unlike the director knew all about *Prince Valiant*, from Harold R. Foster's successful comic strip.

One of the longest serials in print, *Prince Valiant* came before *Superman* and *Batman* and has graced the Sunday newspaper comics pages for sixty years. Foster, born in Nova Scotia on August 16th, 1892, illustrated the first *Tarzan* newspaper comic strip in 1929, and it was his realistic approach to the Lord of the Jungle, rather than the contemporary cartoony fashion of the day, which led to the Arthurian assignment. The world of *Prince Valiant* was one of fire-breathing dragons, damsels in distress, noble deeds, chivalry, and iron-clad knights on trusty steeds. Foster's artwork reflected the epic sweep of this material, and his attention to detail put the delighted reader right in the medieval age, although he took great liberties



Robert Wagner in the 1954 version and Stephen Moyer, the new *Prince Valiant* (inset).



with accuracy by condensing over 300 years of history into Valiant's lifespan.

From the moment it began on February 13th, 1937, the Hearst Publishing syndicated serial was a worldwide success. At the height of popularity for the comic strip, which was recently reissued by Marvel Comics, Foster was averaging 50 hours a week on each Sunday page, his efforts winning shelfloads of awards, including the National Cartoonist Society's Reuben Award and a Fellowship with Britain's Royal Society of Arts. *Prince Valiant* even had his own Royal fan: Edward, the Duke of Windsor, called the serial, "The greatest contribution to English Literature of the last one hundred years."

Carsten Lorenz (who, together with *INDEPENDENCE DAY* director Roland Emmerich, produced *EYE OF THE STORM*, *MOON 44* and *HOLLYWOOD MONSTER* in Germany) said, "*Prince Valiant* is a very big hero in my home country because he stands for so many qualities that we Germans admire." But Anthony Hickox recalled, "I grew up reading the *Tin-Tin* comics and only knew *PRINCE VALIANT* from the 1954 film starring Robert Wagner [directed by Henry Hathaway]. And

I'm sure I only remembered that because of Wagner's awful Valiant-style symmetrical page-boy wig and 'Yonder is the castle of my father' type dialogue. There was also that funny anecdote Wagner used to tell about how people would try and chat him up on the set thinking he was Jane Wyman! I only read the comic strip when I was first offered to direct a *PRINCE VALIANT* film by the German-based production company Constantin in 1993."

Determined to remain faithful to the strip's original, innocent milieu, yet give it an exciting modern-day sophisticated edge, Hickox and Lorenz decided to construct their script in the mode of a medieval James Bond adventure. Hickox explained, "We deliberately went for that fun Bond element. Here's a hero who really thinks for a change. He travels the world. He gets the girls. And he's very resourceful. Valiant's exploits take place in this strange off-kilter world, but everyone must take it seriously. Camp is a word that has been banned from our vocabulary when describing the *PRINCE VALIANT* tone. It is not a comedy and we didn't want it played for laughs. I feel it's in a Terry Gilliam-esque vein and like to call it a cleaner version of *TIME BANDITS*." □

Good Fear

by Jay Stevenson
and Dan Persons

Can the art house and the horror house ever merge? Well, at least one company is willing to give it a try: *Good Fear* is a joint venture between two small independent companies, Good Machine and Kardana Films, that has put together the financing to produce five horror films in the \$2-million range. This effort grew out of the two company's working together on last year's *SAFE*, from director Todd Haynes. The film was an art house allegory with science-fiction overtones, about a woman (Julianne Moore) who suffers from an unidentifiable malady loosely referred to as "20th Century Disease" (apparently an allergic reaction to the 20th century). In effect, the film was a monster movie with a monster that was intangible rather tangible.

In keeping with this seminal venture, *Good Fear* will be making auteur-driven films, with genre elements, that are intended to appeal to audiences who normally look down on horror. The newly formed company completed its first effort earlier this year, *OFFICE KILLER*, starring Jeanne Tripplehorn, Carol Kane, and Molly Ringwald, which marked the directing debut of photographer Cindy Sherman. Their second effort, *LOVE GOD*, completed post-production late this summer. Said Frank Grow, an artist who made his directing debut on the latter film, "I want [the audience] to feel like they've seen something—well, not totally new, but a fresh monster movie, a '90s movie. There are no clichés, I hope; it's like blending monster and sci-fi stuff with a gritty kind of urban melodrama." □

Production Starts

CONTACT

Jodie Foster, Matthew McConaughey, James Woods, Tom Skerritt, Angela Bassett, and John Hurt star in this adaptation of the book by Carl Sagan, scripted by Michael Goldenberg. Long anticipated, at one point with George Miller (*MAD MAX*) attached to direct, the film finally went before the cameras with Robert Zemeckis in the director's chair.

THE LOST WORLD

Steven Spielberg helms this sequel to *JURASSIC PARK*. David Koepp adapted the script from Michael Crichton's novel, which explores the theme of extinction on a mysterious island in some way connected with the ill-fated dinosaur theme park. Jeff Goldblum returns as Dr. Ian Malcolm, this time with Julianne Moore in tow.

Overlooked Emmys

Last issue's article on the Emmy Awards inadvertently omitted the names of several winners: Roger Hall, John Fenner, Alan Tomkins, Frederic Evard Rosalind Shingleton (Art Direction, *GULLIVER'S TRAVELS*); Val Strazovec, Jim Dultz, Jenny Wilkinson (Art Direction, *MUPPETS TONIGHT*); Aileen Seaton (Hairstyling, *GULLIVER'S TRAVELS*); Ernest Troost (Music Composition, *THE CANTERVILLE GHOST*); Natasha Dabizha (Achievement in Animation, *THE WINTER'S TALE*); Tim Webber (Special Visual Effects, *GULLIVER'S TRAVELS*); Michael Westmore, Greg Nelson, Scott Wheeler, Tina Kalliongis-Hoffman, Mark Shostrom, Gil Mosko, Ellis Burtman, Steve Weber, Brad Look (Makeup, *STAR TREK: VOYAGER*); Steven Spielberg, Tom Ruegger, Peter Hastings, Rusty Mills (Outstanding Animated Program, *A PINKY & THE BRAIN CHRISTMAS SPECIAL*); Simon Moore (Writing, *GULLIVER'S TRAVELS*); Robert Halmi, Sr., Brian Henson, Duncan Kenworthy (Outstanding Miniseries, *GULLIVER'S TRAVELS*); John Lithgow (Lead Actor, *THIRD ROCK FROM THE SUN*). □



THE WARRIOR OF WAVERLY STREET

Next March will see the release of the modestly-budgeted science-fiction adventure, **THE WARRIOR OF WAVERLY STREET**.

The Trimark film, written and directed by Manny Coto, was produced by Jennie Lew Tugend (*LETHAL WEAPON*). Tugend knew Coto's work from HBO's *TALES FROM THE CRYPT*, which she produced for three years. Joseph Mazello (*JURASSIC PARK*) stars as 12-year-old Spencer, a boy who finds an alien cyber-suit. "It looks like a six foot tall man with a weird face, but you can go inside it," the young actor explained. Spencer must join with the cyber-suit in order to defend the Earth from a deadly alien called the Brood Warrior.

All of the action takes place over the course of a single night; the extensive night filming was done in an actual South Pasadena neighborhood, as well the legendary Bronson Cave and other locations around Los Angeles County.

Said producer Tugend, "We realized that the movie hung on all of the visual effects and that, unless we were going to make them unique and special, there'd really be no reason to make this movie, because there's been movies about robots and cer-

Local hero thwarts alien invasion in this whimsical fantasy.

Preview by James Van Hise

tainly movies about kids and aliens. So we needed to bring something unique to it."

The filmmakers decided who could accomplish this when one of the bidders for the job, Tom Burman, showed some preliminary designs he had done after reading the script. "They came in with wonderful drawings of a cyber-suit," Tugend continued, "and a year later the cyber-suit we're filming looks very close to their original vision. From that moment on, the cyber-suit became something more human and organic and less robotic. It had more human qualities, and so we refer to it as the gentle giant."

Although the film is aimed at general audiences, the producer feels that the term "family film" is one which has been overused and is often applied to films which are on the bland side. "It's a whimsi-

Upper left: the Tom Burman-designed cyber-suit. Upper right: the alien suit is found and worn by a young man to fight off invaders from outer space.

cal movie that I think should be geared for 9- to 14-year olds. It'll have great action, really unique creatures, good battle sequences. It'll capture the imagination of the younger kids because it's a fantasy fulfillment—the idea that a kid could get inside of a suit, become an action hero and save the world."

Visual Effects Supervisor Tom Ranoné oversaw the special effects and selected the companies to do specific elements of them. The companies working on *WARRIOR OF WAVERLY STREET* include Computer Cafe (who are doing 70% of the special effects), Digital Film Works, Interactive Life Forms, and Area 51. The latter group (which is headed by Tim McHugh) produced the effects for a spectacular opening sequence showing the Brood Warriors invading the planet from which the cyber-suit escapes. (Area 51 is best known for their current excellent work on *SPACE: ABOVE AND BEYOND*.)

Ranoné stated, "The nice thing about this is that it's a movie where the effects work with the picture; they don't take it over. It's sort of like a film made in the '50s. It's a good quality kids film that isn't like a typical '90s picture where it has to have all of these ridiculous 'just say no' [messages]. It's just a good tale." □

LEXX

DARK ZONE ADVENTURES

**Paul Donovan's Living,
Oozing, Exploding Universe.**

By Ian Johnston

The setting may be a violent, gooey world of insect spaceships, drug-addicted cannibals and horny sex slaves, but the philosophy is down to earth. "I think humans are a flawed species, and our characters will reflect that," said Paul Donovan, the creator of LEXX: THE DARK ZONE STORIES, a new Canadian TV science fiction/dark comedy to premiere on Showtime in January.

"STAR TREK tells us that honorable deeds and pure thoughts will make the world a better place. I find that hard to relate to and very boring. Whereas, I can identify with someone who runs when they're shot at. They may have morality. They just don't want to die. They have reluctant morality."

Reluctant with good reason. Being honorable and pure in THE DARK ZONE can get you killed in a painful, bloody manner. And being dead in THE DARK ZONE is no walk in the park either. "It's survival of the fittest," said Donovan. "And although our characters will try, in their own bumpy way, to do the right thing, basically they're just in it for themselves. If a planet deserves to



German actress Doreen Jacobi as Wist, a beautiful inhabitant of Kaagya—a planet made up entirely of garbage

be blown up, it's blown up."

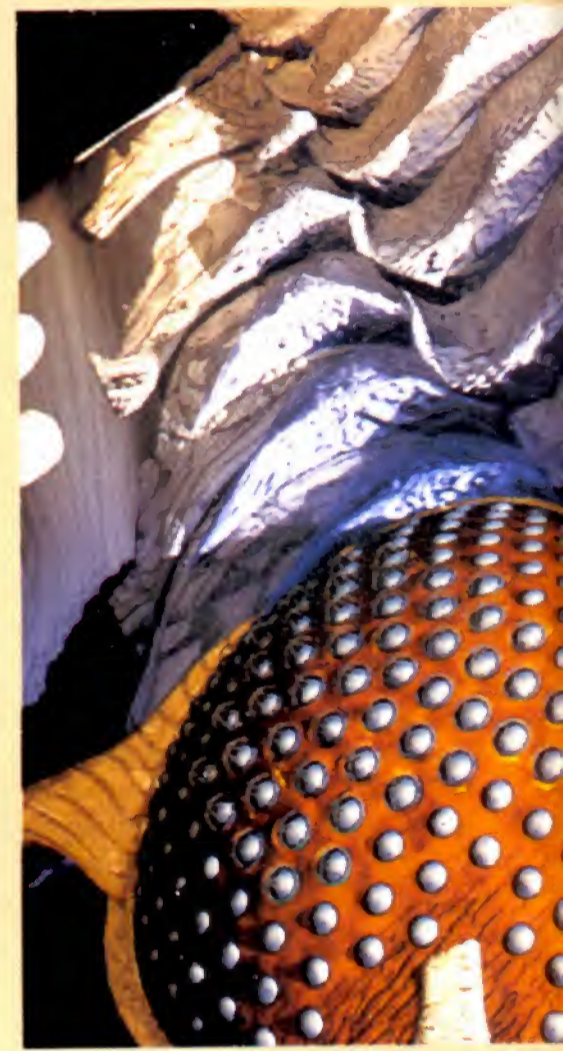
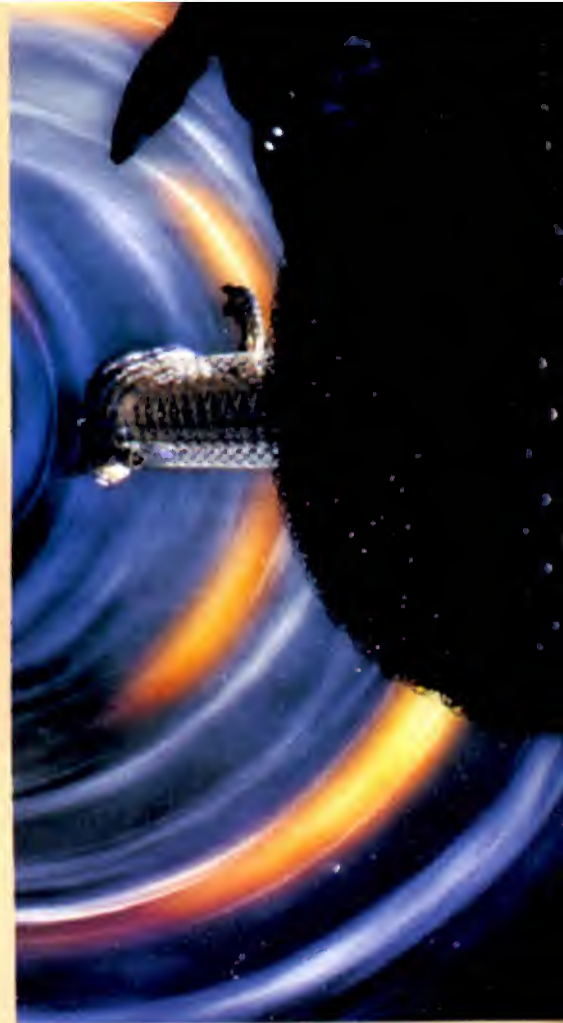
Several worlds do indeed blow up real good in the four, two-hour TV movies that currently make up LEXX: THE DARK ZONE STORIES. Budgeted at just under \$15 million, LEXX was shot in Halifax, Nova Scotia, and at Berlin's legendary Babelsberg Studios last year, using a crew and cast of Canadians and Germans, as

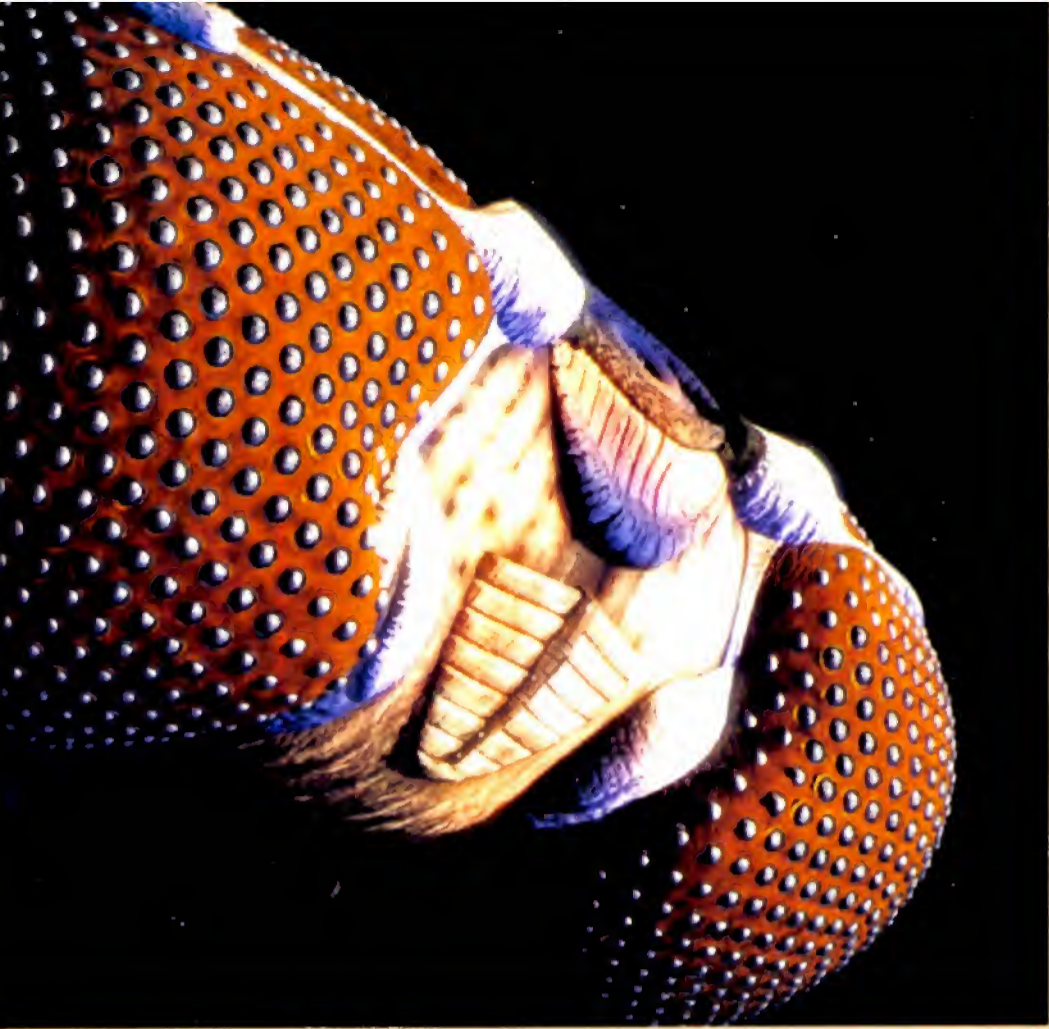
well as such well-known actors as Rutger Hauer, Malcolm McDowell, Tim Curry and Barry Bostwick.

But the most important component of LEXX is creator Donovan, a 42-year-old Halifax native whose previous work includes such darkly comic low-budget science fiction features as DEF CON 4, NORMANICUS (aka NORMAN'S AWESOME EXPERIENCE) and TOM-CAT. LEXX is easily his most ambitious project to date, employing a mammoth amount of computer-generated effects to bring its bizarre universe to life.

"It's ambitious in what we are trying to pull off—yes," said Donovan. "The computer-generated imagery and the advances in it allowed us to pull it off on a TV budget. But even so, I think we're close to being the highest-budgeted show ever produced in Canada."

The four TV movies—an "extended pilot"—follows the adventures of three fugitives who, through a series of accidents and ineptitude, find themselves at the controls of a tyrannical universe's most powerful spaceship—the LEXX. The Manhattan-sized craft is a living, breathing, insect that has been surgically altered, and





CREATOR PAUL DONOVAN

“Although our characters will try, in their own bumpy way, to do the right thing, basically they’re just in it for themselves. If a planet deserves to be blown up, it’s blown up.”

feeds on organic material—usually unlucky prisoners .

“When we were coming up with a name for the ship, we wanted something that worked in all languages, and didn’t translate,” said Donovan. The name LEXX is also something of an in-joke, as it is also a variation on the name of one of the show’s writers—Lex Gigeroff.

“Well it wasn’t my idea, it was Paul’s,” said Gigeroff, a Dartmouth, Nova Scotia writer whose previous writing experience has mostly come in the theatre. “But it’s all part of my plan to rename the world in my honor.”

In the opening story—“I Worship His Shadow”—the LEXX is the property of The League of 20,000 Planets, a tyrannical regime headed by His Shadow, a cloaked bad guy who would rather blow up a planet than negotiate a peace treaty. This destructive course includes sending enemies, law breakers, and anyone else to the protein bank, where their bodies are used to feed the still-under-construction LEXX. His Shadow’s big plan is to pilot the ship on a planet-ravaging journey, putting down opposition once and for all.

Foiling his mission inadvertently is Stanley Tweedle (Brian

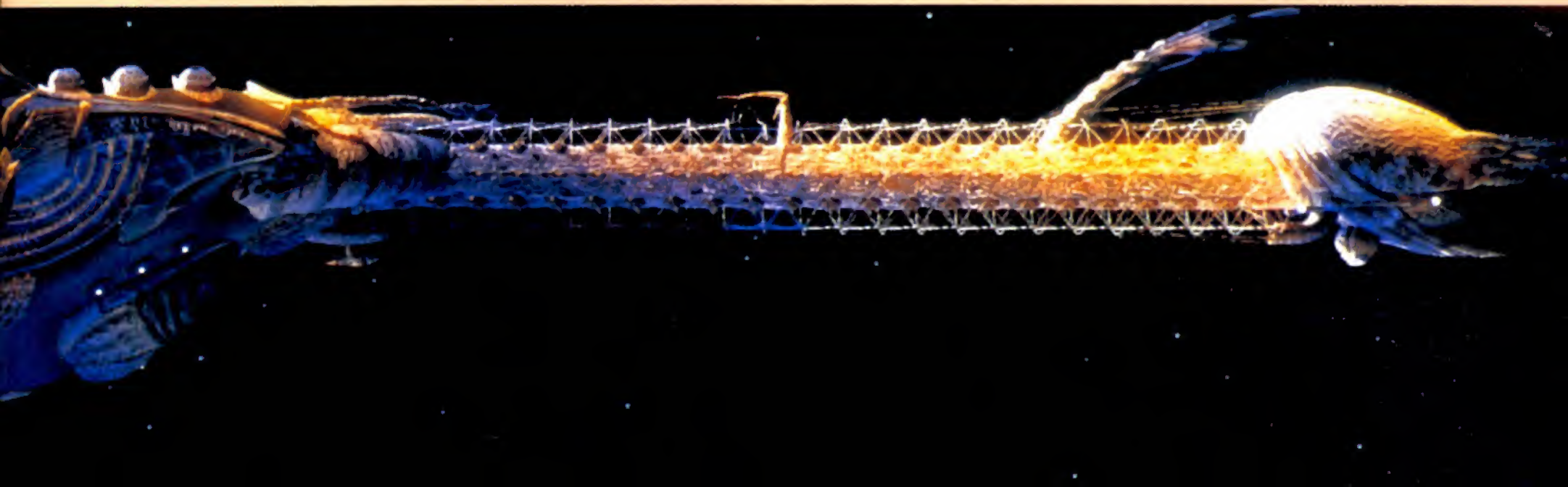
Downey), a luckless Class Four Security Guard described by Donovan as “something of a cowardly lion.” Stan discovers from rebels that he holds the key to commanding the LEXX, even if he doesn’t really want to.

“He has some heroic qualities, but it’s always a surprise when he does something heroic,” said Downey, who worked with Donovan on *NORMANICUS* and the filmmaker’s 1989 ghost flick *GEORGE’S ISLAND*. “Stan hasn’t been laid for seven years, so it kinda dominates his thinking.”

Joining Stan is Zev, played by German actress Eva Habermann, a formerly huge, ugly prisoner who was transformed into a beautiful sex slave by the dictatorial regime. Only problem is, the process wasn’t completed. Zev may be beautiful, but she’s still a tough, bitter woman who has no patience for the people who formerly shunned her. She’s got sex slave characteristics in her, as well as a bit of Cluster Lizard, a murderous creature who stuck his nose into Zev’s transformation at precisely the wrong time. “They’re pretty lonely in this universe,” said the 20-year-old Habermann. “Other than the main characters, everybody is



Top left: LEXX’s bulbous eyes, capable of firing a planet-destroying ribbon of energy. Middle left: The series’ striking organic look, shown to good effect. Below: Part insect, part spaceship and like nothing else: the 10 km long LEXX. Showtime debuts producer/director Donovan’s outre mini-series in January



LEXX

CASTING GUEST STARS

Malcom McDowell, Tim Curry and Rutger Hauer on their quirky star turns.

By Ian Johnston

LEXX: THE DARK ZONE STORIES has hired three well-known character actors and a hunky leading-man to help sell its weird universes.

Malcolm McDowell, Rutger Hauer, Tim Curry and Barry Bostwick have been cast in LEXX, appearing separately in supporting roles in the four initial stories.

The hiring of name actors is, on one level, a marketing ploy aimed at making it easier to sell the Nova Scotian series around the world. Still, it's not like the actors haven't been given anything to do with each playing

Tim Curry, in his guest role as the well-dressed, verse-spouting holographic librarian in *Super Nova*.



small, but memorable roles in the space stories.

McDowell, Curry and Hauer all claim to have been attracted to the Halifax project for the same reason—the script was just too weird to pass up. “Well, this was just very unusual,” said Hauer during filming of story #3, called “Eating Pattern.” “It takes a lot of liberties—but in a good sense. This goes farther than anything I’ve ever done.”

In “Eating Pattern,” Hauer plays Bog, the apparent leader of Klagya, a planet composed entirely of garbage. The survivors of this putrid wasteland sport large worms in their necks which they must provide with Pattern—a hallucinogenic brew that Bog makes out of planet seepage and human body parts—sometimes their own.

“This is so daring and extreme in the way it wants to go. It goes into a real funky territory,” said Hauer, whose manic character provides the story with much of its gallows humor. “I’ve been given a lot of freedom with this character as well. They’re letting me go where I feel I should go.”

Writer Lex Gigeroff noted that Hauer—who shot his scenes in Halifax and Germany—took a great interest in the script, providing some off-beat dialogue suggestions for his character. “You had to reign him in a bit, because some of his ideas were just a little too fucked up,” said Gigeroff. “But some of his ideas were really funny.”

Gigeroff recalled that, in the



Malcom McDowell (left) with series regulars Eva Haberman as Zev and Michael McManus as Kai, a 2000 year old dead man.

original script, Bog learns of the age of LEXX’s resident dead man Kai (Michael McManus). “The line read, ‘He’s 2000 years old—he has a lot of memories.’ But Rutger rewrote it to say, ‘He’s 2000 year old. That’s a lot of birthday parties.’”

McDowell concurred with Hauer’s assessment of the script. “It is pretty far out there. I know who my character is, but don’t ask me about the rest of the story. I don’t have a clue.”

In story #4, called “Giga Shadow,” McDowell is cast as a cleric named Yottskry who is accidentally infused with the essence of the evil leader of The Cluster—His Shadow. Yottskry finds himself in an internal battle to stop the Shadow’s destructive mission and save the universe.

“It’s really kind of fun—with good and evil pulling against each other,” said McDowell

during a break in shooting. “I suppose it’s not particularly far away from stuff I’ve done in the past, but I had some free time, so why not? I’d never been to Nova Scotia.”

McDowell—who was only on the Halifax set for a week—noted that despite the absurd script, he’s playing Yottskry straight. “I don’t like to go too over-the-top. I did the villain in *STAR TREK: GENERATIONS*, and I know they wanted me to eat more scenery than I did. But I think it’s much better to stay in control, and let the plot speak for itself.”

Tim Curry arrived late to *THE DARK ZONE*, filming his sequences on the final day of a four month Halifax shoot. Appearing in story #2, “Super Nova,” the star of the *ROCKY HORROR PICTURE SHOW* plays a holographic librarian known as Poet Man. Speaking

On LEXX’s bridge, director Rainer Matsutani talks with Rutger Hauer (dressed as Bog, leader of the garbage planet) during the filming of *Eating Pattern*.



WRITER LEX GIGEROFF

“We can’t be too serious because we’ve got brains being eaten, cluster lizards ripping apart teenagers, worms coming out of necks and limbs being fed into meat grinders.”



The main cast and directors of LEXX: THE DARK ZONE STORIES. Front, L to R: Michael McManus (Kai), Eva Habermann (Zev), Brian Downey (Stan). Back L to R: Creator/director Paul Donovan, directors Rainer Matsutani (*Eating Pattern*), Ron Oliver (*Super Nova*), and Robert Sigl (*Giga Shadow*).

completely in verse, the well-dressed Poet Man is the last survivor of a dead planet who looks upon intruders as more data to process.

“He [Poet Man] only survived the destruction of his planet because he was very stoned at the time,” laughed Curry, who filmed all his scenes alone, against a green screen.

“In one sense, it’s a bit strange to do scenes that way. But in another sense, you can do them very quickly, which is why I was able to do it.”

Besides convenience, Curry admitted LEXX’s unpredictable script got him interested. “I thought it was wonderfully ambitious. So much of science fiction is dull and predictable, but this is way out there,” he said. “I think it’s really good to encourage that kind of imagination. I’m grimly aware that ROCKY HORROR was done on a non-existent budget over three weeks in a tiny theatre. Yet it was a good idea. Sometimes it’s important to show up for guys with really good ideas.”

ROCKY HORROR co-star Bostwick is filling out the guest star cast with one of the more predictable roles in THE DARK ZONE—on purpose. Bostwick’s leading man looks serve him well in the opening episode, “I Worship His Shadow.” In it, Bostwick is the macho he-man rebel leader Thodin, who is captured by His Divine Shadow.

Through a series of accidents, Thodin, Stan, and Zev manage to escape, and attempt to steal the universe’s most powerful ship LEXX. By all appearances, Thodin is the star of the show. He’s definitely much more brave, macho and good-looking than Stan. But appearances can be deceiving. “We wanted viewers to watch the first episode and say—I got this all figured out. He [Thodin] is the hero,” noted LEXX creator Paul Donovan. “Then ten minutes later, it proves all to be wrong. We created this stereotypical hero so we could kill him off in a pathetic way. Some viewers may be put off by that, but that’s okay. I’m sure some will find it fun. And we accepted from the outset this wasn’t a mainstream network show.” □

strange or they’re monsters.”

Picking up much of her misplaced sex slave instincts is 790, voiced by writer Jeffrey Hirschfield, a robot head who lost his body during Zev’s transformation, but gained a lust for his comely crew member.

Bringing muscle to the ship is Kai (Michael McManus) a 2,000-year-old dead man, the last of of a race called Brunnen G, who is killed by His Shadow in an opening flashback. Now employed as a hitman for his killer, the grim-faced Kai murders just about everyone he sees until he comes to his senses, and joins up with the fugitives on the journey through a fractal core to THE DARK ZONE.

“Who’s the hero? There ain’t one,” said Downey, who plays Stan. “Kai is the perfect guy, but he’s dead. And Zev is the perfect girl, but she’s got a bit of Cluster Lizard in her. So I guess you could say my character is the one the audience identifies with—by default.”

In the four, two-hour movies,

the LEXX crew must do battle with evil, poetry spouting holograms, a man-eating cannibal, and drug-addled dwellers on a planet of garbage. And in the final story, the plot comes full circle, as LEXX returns through the fractal core to confront His Shadow and a mammoth planet-sized insect with plans of its own.

Stories #1 and #4 will contain the brunt of the computer-generated effects. Two and three—in which the LEXX visits planets in The Dark Zone—are lower-budgeted affairs with fewer characters, and little in the way of space battles. “It’s kinda weird how the series works because the two middle episodes are only marginally related to the other two episodes,” said Gigeroff. “I look at the middle episodes as sort of the models for how the series will work—they go to a planet, and shit happens.”

Donovan noted several movies inspired LEXX, though John Carpenter’s 1974 losers-

in-space tale DARK STAR is the most obvious. “It [Dark Star] definitely was an inspiration,” said Donovan. “Like that movie, the central characters don’t have the morals of STAR TREK, but they have this powerful weapon so they can wreak havoc in the universe.”

As well, LEXX hopes to tap into DARK STAR’s sense of the absurd, with humor ingrained into the situations, and few scripted jokes. “We don’t have a lot of jokes per se, but we’re not afraid at looking a little silly,” said Gigeroff. “I mean—there are some odd characters here. I’m sure a lot of viewers used to STAR TREK might be put off by how silly it is. But we have to look a little silly to get away with the level of sex and violence we have here. We can’t be too serious because we’ve got brains being eaten, cluster lizards ripping apart teenagers, worms coming out of necks, and limbs being fed into meat grinders and eaten.”

None of which would have been possible had the computer technology not come of age in the early 1990s. Four years ago, Donovan initiated the project, producing a three minute test reel featuring Downey and CG effects provided by a couple of Toronto animation experts.

The demo was an attempt to show investors what could be done on computers in Halifax on a small budget,” said Donovan. “Frankly, that demo looks rather crude now compared to what is being done for LEXX.”

“From the time I did that three minute tape, I knew this was going to go,” said Downey. “It was just so ambitious and unusual, I knew it was going to fly. And hell yes, I’m ready for this to go to series!”

Shopping that test reel around the world for several years, Donovan raised interest and cash from a variety of international sources. Hitting the ground running in the summer of 1995, Donovan hired co-writers Jeffrey Hirschfield and Lex Gigeroff, whose backgrounds were more in fringe theatre than TV. “We’re trying to bring in people with fresh ideas on every level,” said Donovan. “There are a lot of TV writers out there, but not

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LEXX

PRODUCTION DESIGN

Customizing a new look for their SF universe.

By Ian Johnston

Paul Donovan wanted an original and inconsistent look for the universe of LEXX: THE DARK ZONE STORIES. So he brought in a mismatched group of designers with varying levels of experience in movies, and set them to work on different parts of his universe.

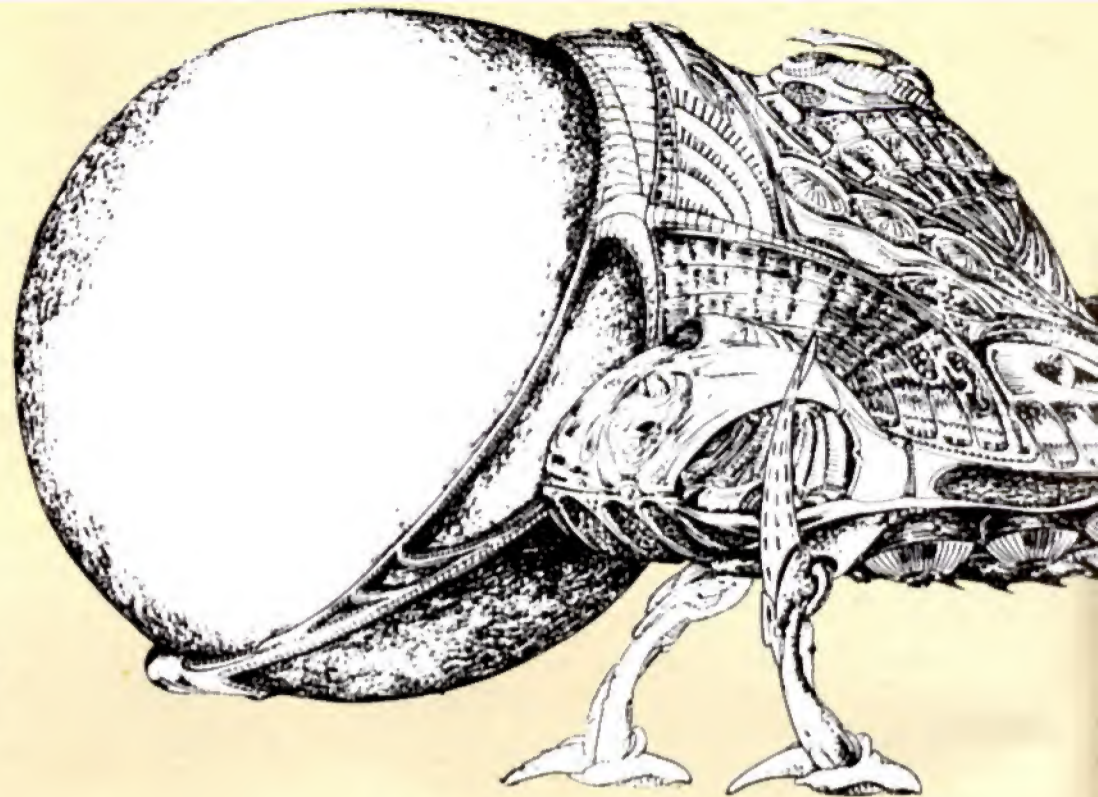
"One of the concepts we have is to keep pushing the design," said Donovan. "If one architect designs a town, it never looks as good as if you have a lot of different architects. Even if every building isn't entirely

successful, it's still more interesting."

Applying this philosophy to his TV show, Donovan hired industrial designers, architects, a matte painter/book illustrator, model builders, and an expert in theatre set design. Heading the group was producer Bill Fleming, a longtime Donovan associate. "Rather than the traditional hierarchy where I would set the design tone for everything, do sketches, and hand them to drafts people, designs were coming from a lot of different people," said Fleming. "They'd get filtered through the command office, and then get sent to the various different locations like C.O.R.E or the model shop or whatever."

It sounds rather confusing, but Fleming insists the approach fit the project well. After all, LEXX tells a story that covers thousands of years on sever-

The pilot of the Brunnen G. ship sees through a membrane of skin stretched and clamped across the front. Like an artificial limb, LEXX's ships aren't pretty—just fascinating!



al different worlds. It doesn't make sense that the look would be the same.

"Our world is chaotic," said Nigel Scott, a Halifax theatre set designer who worked on the organic interior of the living insect ship The LEXX. "All the cars and buildings are designed by different people, so nothing really matches. And LEXX is exactly the same—it's just chaos."

The only consistent look is organic—best reflected in the giant, living, breathing title "character." Fleming says the decision to have living spaceships was always in the script—though it eventually came to drive the plot. "The insect culture developed sometime during the writing of the early drafts of the script and when a few of the design concepts were being kicked around," said Fleming. "The LEXX ship was always this giant, biological form, but that organic idea seeped into other designs. The writers saw some of these designs, and took those ideas into the writing. Along the way, this back story about insect wars came out, and that worked its way into the story."

The insect wars—which precede story #1—involve the defeat of an insect culture by the humanoid Brunnen G. The Brunnen G have harnessed the defeated culture's ability to turn living insects into spaceships, and now sport flying dragonfly fighters capable of firing weapons out of their tails.

However, at the beginning of story #1, the Brunnen G are wiped out by the forces of the tyrannical His Shadow. Fast

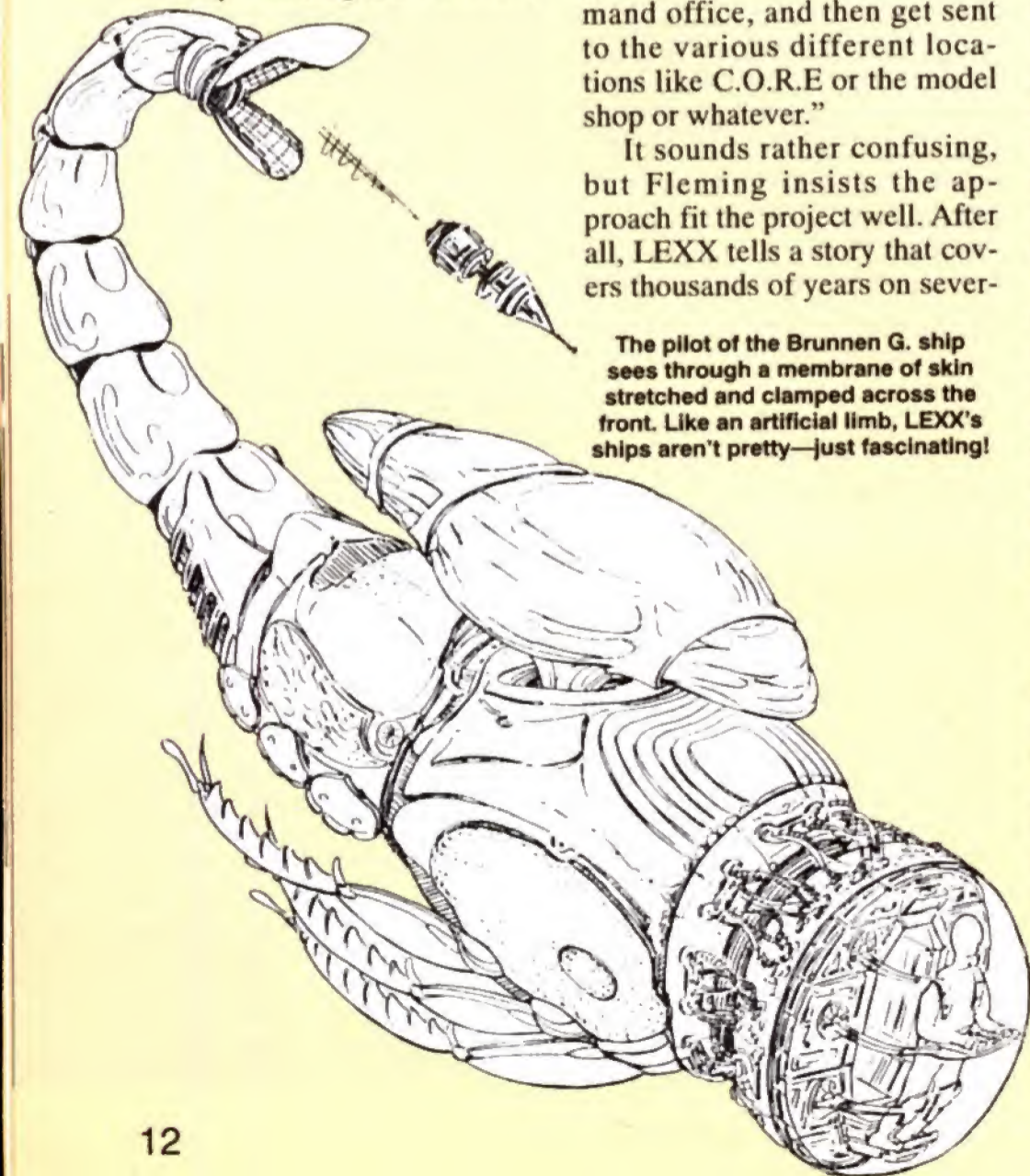
forward 2,000 years, and His Shadow is still attempting to master the technology of breeding insects to be spaceships. Several of his experiments are insect-inspired machines of various shapes and sizes. They look organic, but they are not.

The interior of the LEXX features the program's most elaborate sets, including the LEXX's bridge, galley, bathroom, and a cryogenic sleeping chamber. However, though the humans have grown and tamed the insect, they haven't exactly renovated its interior for comfortable habitation. The LEXX is a gooey mess of veined or ribbed walls (constructed using insulation foam, to give it that inconsistent, organic look), putrid swamps and chambers implanted painfully into the living tissue.

The Galley itself has the appearance of a stomach, a rounded room which spits out predigested food on demand from a set of thick clammy protrusions in the pinkish walls.

"Most science fiction has this modern architectural look, a particular style of architecture that's all octagonal doors, grey walls and hard angles," said Donovan. "I look at that and think—I don't know what the future will bring, but I don't need to follow a tradition. So our world is going to be organic in a design sense—the buildings, space craft and environment are all living material."

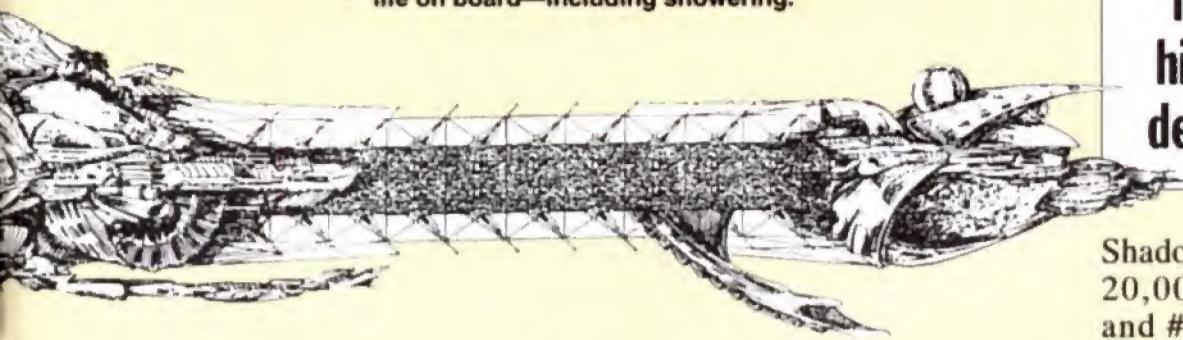
Nonetheless, you've got to be able to drive the darn ship. So for the LEXX's bridge, Fleming enlisted the help of stage designer Scott, who had some inside knowledge on what



LEXX's title ship is the "unfriendly marriage" of animal and machine—a crude adaptation of a living organism. Inside, the crew is surrounded by grotesque living elements that pervade every aspect of life on board—including showering.

DESIGNER NIGEL SCOTT

"In this show it's not a friendly marriage of man and dragonfly. I compare it to the old high school experiment where you make the dead frog's legs move with a small battery."



was needed "I'm the son of a surgeon, so I had a little knowledge to work with," said Scott. "In this show, it's not a friendly future. And the LEXX is not a friendly marriage of man and dragonfly. I compare it to that old high school experiment where you make the dead frogs legs move with a small battery. The interaction between man and insect is more like an incision. It's like living inside a monster that's not happy about it."

So the bridge became a raised platform on a precipice that's enclosed by walls of transparent skin, stretched tight, and clamped awkwardly to metal struts. "It's like a surgical implant or an artificial hip. It's functional, but it sure doesn't look good up close," said Fleming. "From a filmmakers point of view, the stretched skin was easily removable, so you could shoot the bridge from any angle."

The command "chair" where Stanley Tweedle controls the ship is also organic in nature, wrapping around Tweedle when he's driving the ship. There are also a noticeable lack of computer consoles to read on the bridge. "It's more sensual," said Fleming. "The ship appears to embrace him when he's in com-

mand. But all he has to do to raise his hand, and a screen will come up anywhere through CG."

The LEXX crew can't get away from the living space vehicle even when they're freshening up. "It [the shower] is this luminous pink tube that features a phallic shower head that's a little too interested in its work," said Mark Laing, who served as head art director on story #2 and #3. "It'll snake all over you if you're not paying attention. It's quite frisky."

Although LEXX discourages viewers from questioning the science of what they're seeing, you've got to ask yourself—where's the light coming from in this insect? "That was an endless problem," said Laing. "So we created the idea that there are luminous membranes and these pock-marked things that are fluorescent. Maybe it's best you don't think about it much."

"We tried to create the idea that this structure creates its own light," added Fleming. "It's a bit of a cheat, but it's like THE FANTASTIC VOYAGE where everything is lit up around these blood vessels."

LEXX's sense of chaos carries over to The Cluster, the center of His

Shadow's tyrannical League of 20,000 Planets in stories #1 and #4. It's a small planetoid that—as His Shadow's propaganda constantly tells its citizenry—is the center of justice and enlightenment in The Light Zone, a peaceful haven from all evil that exists beyond the fractal core in The Dark Zone. All of which is a bad lie that reveals itself more and more as the stories progress. The Shadow loses his ability even to keep up appearances.

"The Cluster is one of those fascist empires that makes a great effort to maintain control, yet never really succeeds in halting chaos," said Laing. "Cluster City is an inherently chaotic religious dictatorship where the architecture is also chaotic and irregular. You can see that right away—there's a huge crater right in the middle of the city that's never explained. It looks like it was blasted out."

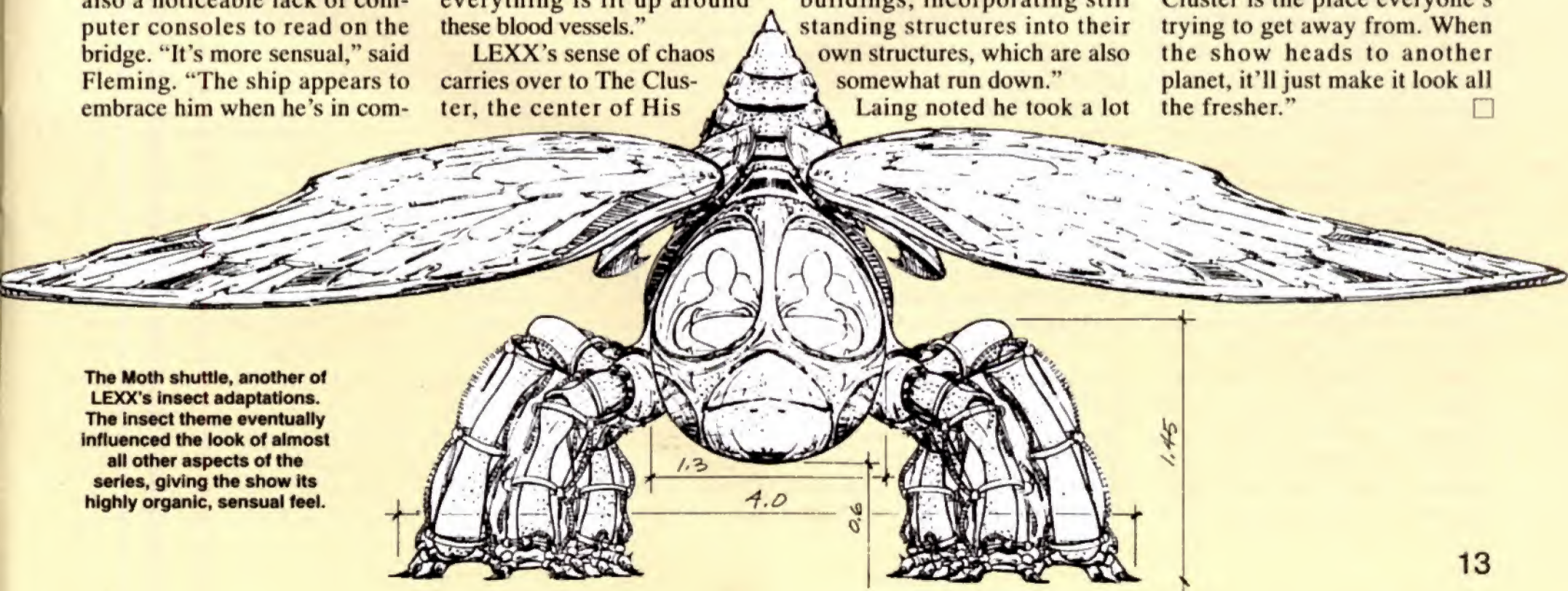
Laing—a conservation architect by trade, specializing in the restoration of historic buildings—seems well-suited for the creation of Cluster City, a thousand-year-old city that's showing its age. "The whole city is built on a ruin built on a ruin. Buildings are built on top of buildings, incorporating still standing structures into their own structures, which are also somewhat run down."

Laing noted he took a lot

of his inspiration for Cluster City from medieval cities, with huge, windowless buildings and shadowy monasteries. "It just made sense really, because a lot of the action takes place in the Hall of Predecessors with all these monk-like clerics running around," he said. "So we just made it resemble sort of this vast medieval astrodome, with the entranceway, the ruins of a past Hall."

Of all the places in the LEXX universe, The Cluster has the most echoes of past TV science fiction—featuring lots of uniformed soldiers, long, grey corridors, and sparse furnishings. Fleming admitted that the show took advantage of LEXX's multiple sets in a converted warehouse for the filming of one STAR TREKian cliché—the long, long corridor. "I really hate that long curving corridor, but we couldn't get around it. There was this one running shot that went on for 150 feet. We ran it through one studio, into a dressing room area, and into another studio," he said.

"The Cluster is definitely the most traditional-looking place. That's sort of the idea; and maybe that's why the Cluster is the place everyone's trying to get away from. When the show heads to another planet, it'll just make it look all the fresher." □



The Moth shuttle, another of LEXX's insect adaptations. The insect theme eventually influenced the look of almost all other aspects of the series, giving the show its highly organic, sensual feel.

necessarily what we needed.”

In truth, LEXX isn't so much anti-STAR TREK, as strongly opposed to all the pitfalls of previous science fiction series. If it's been done before, LEXX doesn't want to do it again. The moralistic and utopian view of much of TV science fiction will have no place in LEXX. And the writers are relishing the chance to serve up great dollops of sex and violence.

After all, The character of Zev is a sexual predator of sorts, and sports an eye-popping minidress and an insatiable appetite for men. LEXX also features two leather clad rapist/pirates, scantily-clad alien men and women and a small dose of nudity. “I'll admit it. I want teenage boys to pull off to Zev's poster,” said Gigeroff.

“Basically, I think we have far too puritanical notions about sex. Sex is fun, sex is good, and I hope we can get a lot of it in the show. We wanted Zev to screw her way across the universe, but we haven't done it yet. Some people in the [Halifax] film community are just appalled at what we're doing, like it's some sexist, male fantasy. God, you can't even show a woman as a sex object without someone thinking it's bad.”

Violence will be presented in LEXX on a regular basis, though with a certain amount of dark humor. People die, limbs are hacked off, heads are cut in half, worms erupt from necks, and brains are consumed. And in a scene sure to weed out the weaker TV viewers, an army of bright-eyed, over-achieving teenagers are accidentally eaten by ravenous space monsters known as Cluster Lizards. “Actually,” said Donovan, “of all the things in the first episode, I think people will be quite happy with the teenagers being eaten.”

Another departure from recent TV sci-fi will be LEXX's refreshing lack of interest in science. There are a few nods to some scientific concepts, but not enough to slow down the action. “A friend heard what I was working on and said, ‘For God's sake, get the science right,’” said Mark Laing, art director on stories #2 and #3. “I told the writers that, and they told me to tell my friend to get a life. This isn't about science.

WRITER LEX GIGEROFF

“Some people in the [Halifax] film community are appalled by what we're doing... God you can't even show a woman as a sex object without someone thinking it's bad.”



His Shadow, carrying out a plan to eliminate any dissenters—they'll either become fuel for the LEXX, or part of the giant fireball that used to be their home planet!

It's satirical and fun, and much of it is impressionistic.”

“We only wanted enough science to get us through the stories,” said writer Jeff Hirschfield. “The LEXX has a particle accelerator, and that's all you need to know. We don't want to bother with dilithium crystals. The LEXX gets its fuel from eating. Simple enough.”

The living LEXX ship is the center piece of the show's organic look. Besides LEXX, there are several, single-man dragonfly fighters who fire from their tails, moth shuttles, and spider-like spacecraft who extend their legs to fire sheets of energy on the luckless planets below.

The LEXX interior sets are a mass of veined walls and irregularly shaped, gooey pinkish rooms, with flesh held back by awkwardly inserted metal struts. The ship's galley is basically a ribbed stomach, with pre-chewed food pouring out of a protrusion in the wall.

“I wouldn't say the show's insect-inspired as much as organic,” said Donovan. “A lot of things in the show are biologically driven, which is partly a fascination of mine. We are a species who often denies our biology.

Culture tries to transcend the realities of biology, but with only varying degrees of success.”

Thus, LEXX features the murderous society of The League of 20,000 Planets, who open the show by wiping out the Brunnen G, a race that has mastered the ability to grow insects into spaceships. Two thousand years later, the League is still attempting to understand and use this ancient technology. Their first experiment: LEXX.

The insect element eventually took over the plots of story #1 and #2, climaxing with a battle between the LEXX and a survivor of the supposedly dead insect society. “The insect concept came fairly late,” said producer Bill Fleming, who also heads the show's art department—an odd mix of industrial designers, architects, theatrical designers, and book illustrators from Canada and Germany. “The script did describe something like, ‘they climb into the moth.’ But very early on we decided that rather than use the term ‘moth’ just as a name, why not make it a real moth—some kind of bio-engineered life form.”

Donovan admitted the idea of insects in space is not a new one. “It's not unique at all. But

the sophistication of CG allows us to make far more complex models. A dragonfly in space is not new, but it's always been difficult to do on a TV budget. Whatever people say about the show, they will say that, design-wise, it is fresh.”

Shooting the ambitious, eight-hour opus wasn't without its problems. Because the series was green-lighted barely three months before filming commenced, the scripts for several of the episodes were still in the writing stage when filming schedule began. Both episode two and three underwent numerous changes during shooting in Halifax and Germany.

“It was very hectic,” said Ron Oliver, who helmed story #2, “Super Nova.” “When I first got the script, it was all over the place, because the writers had hit a wall with it. The main characters were these buffoons. That probably works on paper, but the audience needed something to hold on to. So that had to be tidied up a bit by adding some motivation for these characters,” he said. “Fortunately, the writers were very gracious about it. There were no egos on this project. There was a lot of money involved, but what they wanted to do was going to cost a lot more than that. So there was a real sense of pitching in—sort of like a school project.”

So far, the show has struck a chord with international markets. More than 40 countries have purchased the series so far, based only on a few completed scenes and a short video set to Bonnie Raitt's version of “Burning Down The House.” It's a good start on the road to becoming a series. Donovan noted that, if all goes well, filming of new episodes will begin before viewers will get their first look at LEXX on Showtime. The production has already commissioned scripts for the series and is gearing up for production even before the pilot films air.

And just what can viewers expect in LEXX's future? “We'll go into the same direction we are now—great babes in skimpy costumes, likable main characters who are constantly getting in trouble, and planets that are weird and usually deserve to be blown up. And very often, they will be blown up.” □

LEXX

SPECIAL EFFECTS

Setting new standards for television effects.

By Ian Johnston

To achieve the elaborate special visual effects of LEXX, creator/producer Paul Donovan brought in C.O.R.E. Digital Pictures, a three-year-old Toronto computer animation company whose previous work included computer-generated effects on TEK WAR, the pilot for THE OUTER LIMITS ("The Sandkings"), and some of the downloading sequences in JOHNNY MNEMONIC. "The CG effects on this are going to be far beyond anything you might see on BABYLON 5 or SPACE: ABOVE AND BEYOND," said C.O.R.E. president Bob Munroe. "Those shows have so far set the standard for TV. We want to take it farther."

Munroe estimated 70% of its LEXX's footage will contain computer animation in one form or another. For some space battles and planet incinerations, the entire scene may be computer generated. In other cases, CG will be used to enhance or dress up existing live action shots.

"One of the specialities of C.O.R.E. is being able to integrate computer animation and live action so that you wouldn't notice anything," he said. "The pilot episode for TEK WAR was and probably still is the most effects-oriented show ever produced for TV—more than even the DEEP SPACE NINE pilot. But most people wouldn't think of TEK WAR that way. We tried to integrate the effects as much as possible."

Ironically, for a show that is taking pains to avoid the ground trod by STAR TREK, C.O.R.E.'s CEO is none other than William Shatner. "Bill is 10% hands-on and 90% figurehead," said Munroe. "He is the guy who brings us the attention, and who knows all the contacts."

C.O.R.E.'s CGI work creates the series' insect ships, such as story #1's battleship The Foreshadow, a spiderweb-like ship that opens up to fire sheets of energy at planets. "The Foreshadow is sort of organic in how it looks, opening up to fire



Above: CGI effects composite of the Brunnen G Dragonfly Fighters. Below: Production design artwork, showing the ship's weapon-launching tail.



this death ray," said producer Bill Fleming, who headed the show's design group. "The next generation [Mega Shadow] is more octopus like. And there's also ships that have been developed that have more of a fish-like, cigar-tube look.

"They [The League] have defeated this culture, but without mastering their technology," said C.O.R.E. animator Steve Elliott, who worked four months on the Mega Shadow spacecraft. "It takes them thousands of years, but after a while, they learn how to grow spaceships, not build them." Computer animation is also being employed to convey the LEXX exterior—a bulbous insect head with multiple bug eyes, on a slim, mechanical frame.

Noted art director Mark Laing—who has previously worked on set design for the Nova Scotia-shot Hollywood projects THE SCARLET LETTER and DOLORES CLAIBORNE—working with CG is quite a freeing process for an ar-

chitect used to having to deal with the realities of building materials and gravity. "For something like the Cluster mortuary, you could really play with the size of the thing," said Laing, referring to the graveyard of His Shadow. "In that, we designed an 800-meter-high structure that looked sort of like a funeral urn from the outside. Inside, it's honeycombed with hundreds and hundreds of bodies. Try building something like that on set."

For art director Nigel Scott, going from stage work to designing for computers had its pluses and minuses. "There was a terror from my perspective, because my history is in designing sets that are built by hand," said Scott. "We'd design some things for LEXX thinking that they would be built, only to find out they're being done by computer. You'd think to yourself, 'I wish I'd known that in the first place,' because when you're dealing with CG, the sky's the limit." □

Stanley Tweedle's space craft is prepped for a shot by David Albiston, who heads the team in charge of LEXX's models, miniatures and prosthetics.



MARS ATTACKS

Tim Burton sends up the bubblegum alien invader genre.

By Frederick C. Szebin and Steve Biodrowski

In 1962, Topps' "Mars Attacks!" cards never saw national distribution due to parental outrage over their blood and gore. But over the years, the little bubblegum cards have become sought-after collector's items alleged to have twisted more young minds than Sam Raimi, George Romero or Hershell Gordon Lewis in his prime. Now, inspired by the cards, as well as the '50s

Burton directs invasion scenes on location in Kansas. Although complex studio sets were used, almost half the film was shot on location.

sci-fi movies that inspired them, director Tim Burton, producer Larry Franco, screenwriter Jonathan Gems, and composer Danny Elfman are giving breath to Topps' joyously anarchic bits of pop culture in a \$60 million science fiction homage to be unleashed December 13 as a delightfully inappropriate Christmas movie.

A mega-cast has been assembled for Burton's excursion into apocalypse—Jack Nicholson, playing two roles as the President of the United States and a money-grubbing real estate hustler, Annette Bening, Pierce Brosnan, Jim Brown, Glenn Close, Danny DeVito, Michael J. Fox, Pam Grier, Lukas Haas, Tom Jones, Lisa Marie, Sarah Jessica Parker, Natalie Portman, Barbet Shroeder, Martin Short, Sylvia Sidney, Rod Steiger and Paul Winfield (whew!), all taking less than their usual salary to work on Burton's tribute to '50s sci-fi movies.

The sweeping story ranges from Kansas, where we first get an inkling of the Mar-tian's intentions through a stampede of burning cattle, to the nation's capital, where the President and his overzealous military are confused and ineffectual in their response to the aliens' attacks, and to Las Vegas, where the little green guys joyously wreak havoc on the tackiest place on Earth.

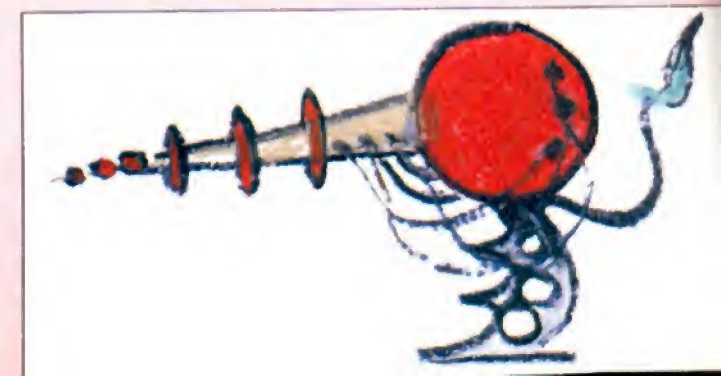
Coming up with a story based on a series of bubblegum cards was the first challenge the production faced. The task was given to screenwriter/playwright Jonathan Gems,

who wrote the scripts for *WHITE MISCHIEF*, and the 1986 Critics Circle Award-winning play "Susan's Breasts."

"The original cards were so beautiful, with their style of painting and everything," said Burton. "They were really pure, not campy. They were just what they were. They had a lurid quality that I like in movies. I think such a thing serves as a release rather than being culturally damaging."

With movies so commonly seeking inspiration from TV shows, comic strips and

A surprise attack targets Grandma Sylvia Sidney.





Burton's Martian's blast away after addressing Congress. Above: The '60s Topps bubblegum cards that inspired the look of the movie aliens.

video games, it doesn't seem so odd that bubblegum cards should have their day in the Hollywood sun. Burton's involvement began when he saw "Dinosaurs Attack!" cards in a shop. Later, he wasn't sure if the bloody images were something he had actually seen, or if they were something dredged out of his notoriously dark subconscious. When he was assured the cards did exist, he thought about adapting them into a film, a plan that was later put on the back burner when such a picture seemed too much like JURASSIC PARK.

When the director put his plans for DINOSAURS ATTACK! aside, he picked up their inspiration, MARS ATTACKS!, instead, and the process of creating a storyline had begun. Burton knew he needed something that could justify the source material, please his own cinematic interests, and hold up a ton of big-name stars.

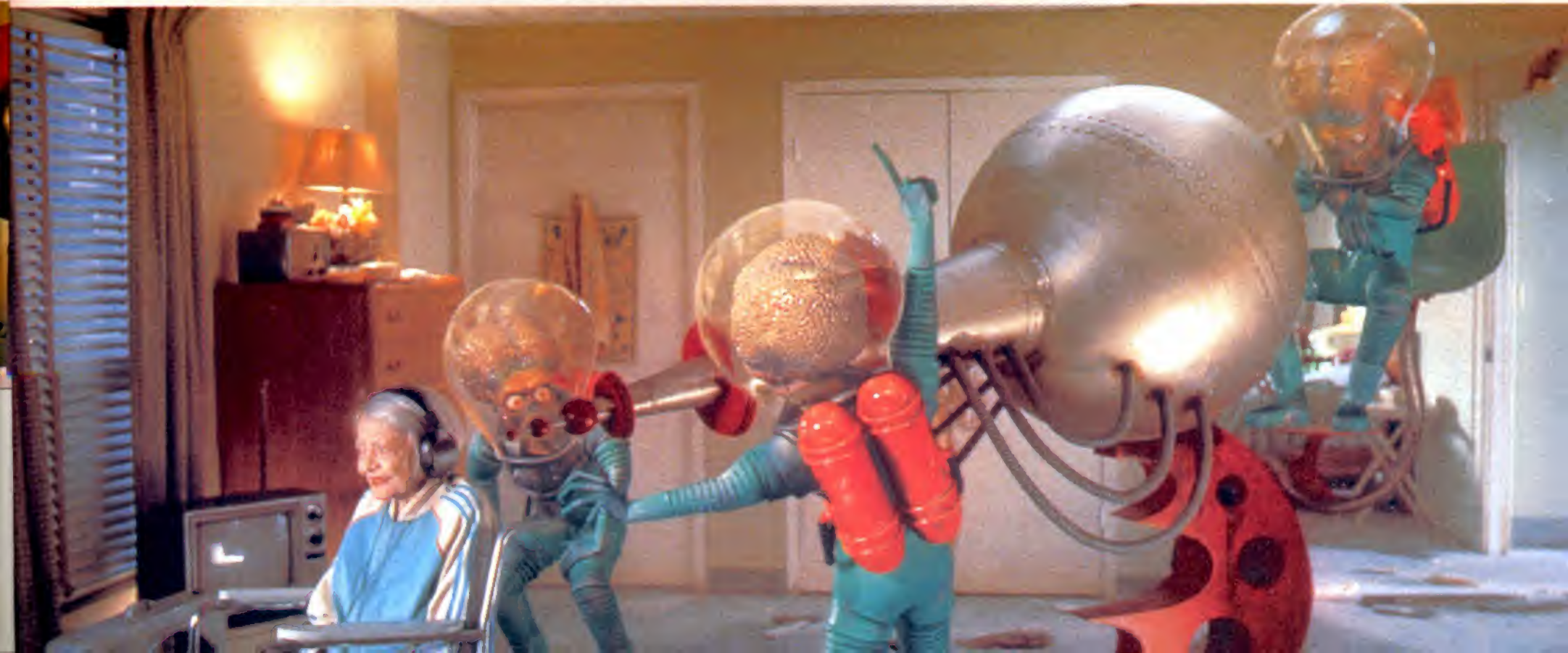
"It's not dissimilar from anything else, really," Burton said. "What's really good about these little vignettes is that there's a whole genre of movies based on that approach. MARS ATTACKS! seems to fit

with that type of genre well.

"There were about 10 cards that I really liked. When Jonathan and I were first working on the script, we wanted to make sure we had certain images that we liked in there, not necessarily in the order they were originally presented, but they're in there somewhere."

Only a few of the cards, such as the burning cattle and the Martians watching their handiwork on TV, made it into the film. To anchor any story ideas, Gems first began with Burton's point of view of what

The look of the gigantic Martian weapon was inspired by a sketch (bottom left) by director Tim Burton. The director and his invaders are just out to have fun.



the film should be.

"When I came on the project," Gems noted, "Tim was thinking 'disaster movie'—the invasion is like a disaster. Tim's always liked GODZILLA movies. There are two levels in the movie—the disaster and the characters. You have this cheesy soap opera, with these ridiculous Martians fucking it all up. That was Tim's inspiration—a combination of the images and that idea.

"It so happens that Tim and I love movies like TEENAGERS FROM OUTER SPACE and all those B-movies. ED WOOD is an homage to that. Here was a chance to do something like PLAN NINE FROM OUTER SPACE—with a bit more money, of course! We thought that was wonderful."

With that crux of an idea in mind, Gems went off and wrote his script, making the simple error a lot of writers make in writing science fiction movies—he packed so much into it that the resulting film would easily have broken the \$100 million mark. Burton's idea at this point was to pay homage to stop-motion godfather Ray Harryhausen by depicting the invading hoards in classic, frame-by-frame technique. Burton went so far as to travel to Europe to find the talent he needed for the epic stop-motion thriller he envisioned. But with that time-consuming process in mind, Gems found he had to do a little reworking of his ideas.

"I had to rewrite it many times to bring it in on budget," Gems admitted. "My first draft was budgeted at \$200 million. Obviously, the studio didn't want to spend that much, so we had to cut it down to \$65 million, which was hard. Tim didn't want to

“It’s a disaster movie and cheesy soap opera,” said writer Jonathan Gems, “with Martians fucking it all up.”



With a Las Vegas showgirl, (left to right) Tom Jones, director Tim Burton, Annette Bening and Jim Brown, parodying the disaster film genre.

lose anything good. We did lose a couple of nice things, but we kept most of it.

"This wasn't an easy film because it's so wild," Gems continued, "and even with Tim involved people were worried about the money being spent on something that's not mainstream. Studios like to do what's been done before, and MARS ATTACKS! is different. Basically, this film is similar to WAR OF THE WORLDS. If you do something like that, you've got to spend the money to do it properly."

The author injected humor into the proceedings that he feels makes the picture just a little bit different than what has come be-

fore. "There is broad comedy in the film, but there are other forms as well," said Gems. "It's an all-around comedy, not a spoof like Mel Brooks. It's satirical of America like DR. STRANGELOVE. It's a social comedy with a sophisticated sense in the way that one finds a '50s movie funny. They didn't make them as comedies, but they're funny when we look at them today. There's a certain innocence that's funny today."

After numerous rewrites Gems actually left the project for a time. "The studio wanted to move quickly," he said. "It took a while to negotiate the rights with Topps. By that time, there wasn't a lot of time left to write the script. I wrote the first draft in three weeks. We were in a tremendous rush. I did a bunch of drafts and burned out. I was getting three hours of sleep at night. Tim said have a holiday."

ED WOOD scribes Scott Alexander and Larry Karaszewski were brought in for a couple of drafts. According to Gems, the writing duo added some good dialogue, but changed the story so much that no one really knew what was going on anymore.

"I came back from holiday," Gems said, "and Tim called me back to do the rest of the script. I think there were other problems that weren't Scott and Larry's problems. They invented a character that I kept [the President's daughter] played by Natalie Portman, but that was all they did." Alexander and Karaszewski receive no screen credit for their work, but have reportedly been good sports about it and haven't pressed the Writers Guild for credit. Gems cited two people who really helped to make the project—producer Larry Franco



Martians in Congress, CGI effects by ILM. Burton's Martian concept, below.



MARTIAN INSPIRATION

THE BUBBLEGUM CARDS

Public outrage halted sales, but the series lives on.

By Chuck Wagner

The 1950s had seen the first of the large wave of flying saucer sightings. Soon, the movies were filled with those twin pillars of menace of the Eisenhower Age: UFOs and war. It was during this period that a young man named Len Brown began his career. Working for Topps, he and a dedicated team in 1962 created perhaps the ultimate evocation of leftover late '50s paranoia: the infamous "Mars Attacks!" card series. Topps—which owns sole right to the concept of packing cards with gum—added macabre menace from the Red Planet to go along with their pink squares of gum.

Brown, who wrote the cards and still works for Topps, was just 21 at the time. He had gone to work for Topps at the age of 18, mentored by Woody Gelman, a friend and former magazine publisher hired by Topps to dream up new ideas for bubblegum trading cards. Under Gelman, Brown worked on Topps' 1962 Civil War Centennial Cards, an unlikely forerunner to "Mars Attacks!" "It was during that series that a veteran pulp artist named Norm Saunders was hired by Woody Gelman to paint some wonderfully detailed pictures that were no bigger than 5" x 7"," said Brown. "The series, gore and all, was pretty successful.

The success of the Civil War cards led Gelman and Brown to discuss science fiction concepts for a card series. Gelman was an avid pulp collector who had a complete run of Hugo Gernsback's *Amazing Stories*. Noted Brown, "We finally came up with the idea of doing a modern War of the Worlds, calling the concept 'Mars Attacks' after briefly considering the name 'Attack from Space.' After working briefly with Wally Wood on the formative cards, we decided on the team of Bob Powell (a wonderfully talented and prolific comic book artist) and once more Norm Saunders. Bob would do the pencils and Norm would paint right over them on illustration board.

"We did 55 cards in the series and were quite proud of them. As soon as the product was printed we placed them in several test stores in Brooklyn. Sales were mixed. A



Len Brown, co-creator of MARS ATTACKS!
The cards' gory violence led to their being
withdrawn from sale after a storm of criticism.

couple of stores did very well, and sold the cards rapidly. A couple of other stores reported very little interest in the product.

Topps widened the product trial and shipped the cards to other cities in the East, but began to get bad press over the cards' high quotient of blood and gore. Noted Brown, "It was kind of shocking to top management to get this kind of attention—after all our heritage with trading cards had previously been sets depicting 'Flags of the World,' 'Railroad Trains,' 'U.S. Presidents,' etc. The only controversy we had encountered were with the Elvis Presley trading cards [when Elvis was thought of as a major cause of juvenile delinquency]. So, the 'Mars Attacks!' series was never sold elsewhere. No further shipments were made. Only those fortunate to have seen the limited shipments remembered them decades later. The original cards became the most [valuable] non-sports collectible series that Topps ever published by the time the 1970s rolled around. We heard that individual cards were

selling for \$5 to \$10 a card. By the late '80s, I started to hear that the original complete set was going for \$1,500 to \$2,000."

Brown detailed how the cards were created: "Woody and I worked together coming up with the scenes," he said. "Woody, a former animator for Max Fleischer and Paramount Studios would rough sketch an idea. The idea was sent to Bob Powell who would dramatically redraw it as if it were the cover of a pulp magazine. When the series was painted, I wrote the descriptions on the back of the cards as well as the front captions; i.e. 'Burning Flesh.' Those were days that I couldn't wait to arrive at work and meet with Woody as we planned the science-fiction bubblegum cards. What a way to make



a living! I thought I was pretty lucky."

The cards emerged from limbo two years ago, after the mid-'80s pastiche "Dinosaurs Attack!" had shown that the concept, too gruesome in its own day, could now find an enthusiastic audience, eager to embrace the gory carnage. "Probably over the years, we have received more requests for a reprint of 'Mars Attacks!' than any other series we had ever published," said Brown. "We tested the re-issue waters about five years ago by reprinting our 1960s 'Batman' Trading Card Series. That worked out very well, and immediately we had plans to do a 'Mars Attacks!' re-issue. One thing after another interfered with our plans, until we got around to doing it [in 1994]."

Brown worked with Gary Gerani at
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MARTIAN VICTIM

ROD STEIGER

The veteran Oscar-winner on working with Burton.

By Steve Biodrowski

Rod Steiger has a long and illustrious career on stage, screen, and television, including an Oscar for *IN THE HEAT OF THE NIGHT* (1967) and an Emmy for *LETTERS OF HELOISE AND ABELARD*. He first gained critical attention for his supporting performance opposite Marlon Brando in *ON THE WATERFRONT* (1954), directed by Elia Kazan, and he is best known for his highly-charged dramatic roles in classic films like *THE PAWNBROKER* (1965), directed by Sidney Lumet.

This dramatic pedigree may seem strange for someone appearing in a satirical science-fiction comedy from a director known more for eccentric visual stylings than dramaturgy; however, Steiger's filmography does contain its share of science-fiction (the title role in the 1969 filmization of Ray Bradbury's *THE ILLUSTRATED MAN*) and black comedy ("Mr. Joyboy" in 1965's *THE LOVED ONE*, adapted by Terry Southern [*DR. STRANGELOVE*] and Christopher Isherwood from the Evelyn Waugh novel). Add to that roles in 1987's *THE KINDRED* (co-scripted by *PSYCHO*'s Joseph Stefano), *AMERICAN GOTHIC* (1988), *GUILTY AS CHARGED* and *THE PLAYER* (both 1992)—and you have all the horror, fantasy, and comedy experience necessary to handle the outrageous approach that Tim Burton has taken to the Martian invasion of Earth.

Steiger was attracted to *MARS ATTACKS!* for the opportunity to work with director Tim Burton. "I considered [Burton] one of the more individualistic and perceptive directors," said the actor. "He's a director that, if you walk into the middle of the movie, you can say, 'That's Burton's picture.' Burton has this individual view; I was taught an artist was one who tries to communicate his view as entertainingly as he can. Burton seems to me to do that better than anybody at the moment, whether you like him or not—I think he's wonderful. He's only 38, which is amazing, and one of the hardest-working people I've ever worked with in my life. He handles pressure



Rod Steiger as the President's hawkish military advisor, General Decker, called the cast one of the best since *ON THE WATERFRONT*.

extremely well."

But there were other incentives. "The part was a lovely part," Steiger continued, "and suddenly I had the pleasure of working with Mr. Nicholson, Ms. Close, and Pierce Brosnan—it was one of the best casts since *ON THE WATERFRONT*. I was flattered."

Steiger noted that he got "advice" about working with Burton. "Before I had my first meeting with Tim," said Steiger, "a friend of mine told me, 'Don't frighten him.' I said, 'I'm tired of that. I'm not a bad person.' He said, 'You've got a presence.' I said, 'What am I going to do—cut my head off?' Stan Winston, who's the godfather of my son, told me, 'Now you be careful. I've worked with him, and he doesn't like to meet people—he's very shy.' So I knock on the door, and by this time I'm expecting to see Raskolnikov [from *Crime and Punishment*] in a corner, all in black, making the sign of the cross as I enter and saying, 'Stop there—we'll talk from here.' Instead, the

guy opens the door and says in Italian, 'At last we meet, maestro.' Well, we screamed and yelled like two Italians for an hour, while I was thinking, 'Where the hell is this inhibited, frightened person?'

"So we had a lovely talk, and he told me how the Martians reduce me in size and I'm screaming and yelling with my guns blazing, and they step on me. I said, 'Does my voice go down [to a squeak]?' He said, 'It does now.' He didn't call the front office and say, 'This guy's trying to take over the picture.' He knew I was professional enough, and any contribution from anywhere that makes the overall piece better is the professional responsibility of anyone involved in the movie, whether grips, actors, or whatever."

Steiger noted he liked the extemporaneous atmosphere of working with Burton. "He reminds me of a European director, because I knew Fellini and worked with some others over there," said Steiger. "They don't come on the set with a script that's loaded with the directions. Burton comes on the set with nothing; well, there's the script girl. He's got it in his head. He sees the set, and he takes it from the rehearsal and the actors, rather than superimposing any visual idea he has on an actor, thereby making him uncomfortable because it's his reality, not the actors. That's a good director. It was a pleasure working with him. Of course, I had to carry Jack Nicholson and Glenn Close, but I'm used to that." Steiger laughed.

With this kind of a cast, one might expect star egos to be a factor, but nothing was further from the truth, according to Steiger. Noted Steiger, "The reason was that—and this is important—the leading actors came from a theatre background, because they were older actors. They don't come that way anymore; they come from television, which is destroying a lot of things. People do two TV shows, and suddenly they say, 'I don't want any press on the set,' which Mr. Nicholson, Ms. Close, and I could never understand. If one of them had been on this picture, I'm sure one of us would have gone up and said, 'Excuse me, what do you do for a living?'



A dream cast: Steiger (r) and scientific advisor Pierce Brosnan brief President Jack Nicholson on the invasion. Steiger extolled the cast's professionalism.

"I saw Nicholson on his face, on his stomach on the floor, after he could go home, doing off-stage lines for a guy who had two lines. They were professionals, and they know that acting is reacting, and if the person you're supposed to be reacting with is gone, it doesn't help your performance very much."

The thought led Steiger to muse about filming *ON THE WATERFRONT* with Marlon Brando. "That's what happened to me in the taxi scene," he recalled. "Marlon [Brando] went home when I was supposed to have my close-ups with him. I'll never forgive that son-of-a-bitch. But we came out even, which must have burned his ass! I haven't heard from him since, by the way."

If "acting is reacting," as Steiger stated, and if the absence of a co-star can affect one's own performance, then what was it like playing opposite the CGI invaders? Quipped Steiger, "What am I going to say? Nine times out of ten, when you work with someone, he's not there anyway!" However, in this case, the absence was not a critical factor. "That's a different thing," he stated. "You accept that, and therefore you don't feel insecure. They show you pictures, and you put it there in your mind. It's not a process of human communication or behavior between two human beings, which changes it a lot. Because movies are the perfect place for improvising things around a given reality that the playwright presents. There's millions of ways to do a

scene. It took me three years to realize that two billion scripts were not sent out to the public, so if I change something, two billion people do not stand up and say, 'No, that was a but, not an and.' To me the script is not sacred, but it is the sacred skeleton of what's to be done—as long as you don't deny what the playwright was trying to do. If you want to change the thought, then you have to say 'hold it' and sit down; but if you want to paraphrase, as long as you give the right cue to the other actor, that's fine."

"But you have none of that constriction when you work with Burton, because his mind is not constricted," added Steiger. "He's not commercially constricted, even though he's under incredible pressure. Something people don't realize is that, when you are put in a position where up to a \$100 million is being spent, there is the survival instinct of the human being, and he will select things to play safe and not even know it, because of the pressure. Burton fights against that, and I guess most of the people in that cast have fought against that all their lives."

Steiger believes the fight, in this case, was worth the effort. "I had one of the best experiences ever," he said. The result, of course, is quite a bit different from the style of theatrical realism which imbued the films that first made Steiger famous. Noted Steiger, "You have live people; you have animated people; you have digital people. It's one great big playing card, with the

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"Tim was insisting on stop-motion," said co-producer Larry Franco. "The smartest thing was CGI."



and star Jack Nicholson. Franco has a long history of quality science fiction, fantasy and horror films, having worked with John Carpenter on *THEY LIVE*, *PRINCE OF DARKNESS*, *BIG TROUBLE IN LITTLE CHINA*, *CHRISTINE*, *STARMAN* and *ESCAPE FROM NEW YORK*. Franco also served as co-producer on Burton's *BATMAN RETURNS* and had just wrapped *JUMANJI* when Burton approached him on *MARS ATTACKS!* Franco's task was to bring in the film on a decent budget, without Burton having to jettison more ideas.

"I was lucky," Franco said of helping bring the Martian attack in cost-effectively. "The timing was perfect for me. The fact that I knew Tim and ILM and that I had just come off of *JUMANJI*, a movie that was substantially heavy in computer-generated images, was a big help. *JUMANJI* wasn't an influence that was immediately apparent to me, but within a few weeks I realized that the smartest thing for us to do was to go with computer animation simply because integrating stop-motion animation with what we were doing was just not happening."

When Franco came on the project, Burton and Gems had trimmed so many of the stop-motion effects that the total amount of screen time left to the little guys would have been about 10 to 15 minutes.

"Nobody was really convinced, including Tim and myself, that we had developed the movie to a point where we could make it work," said Franco. "There was a lot of testing; we spent a lot of money and weren't getting anything that proved they were going to be able to take the stop-motion puppets with the glass helmets, animate them and incorporate them into the movie where it would look like they were actually in the picture. But the testing went on. Everybody felt like we were getting there."

"Tim was really insisting at the time to go along with stop-motion animation and see how that looked. I had seen the early stages of computer effects for *JUMANJI*, and whether you're moving a model physically with your hands, or if you're manipulating an image on a screen with a keyboard it's still frame-by-frame animation. I'm sure, intellectually, Tim knew that,

Nicholson in his dual role as Las Vegas real estate hustler Art Land, an acting tour de force a la *DR. STRANGELOVE*.



MARTIAN DESIGN

ART DIRECTION

Designer Wynn Thomas on devising the sci-fi look.

By Steve
Biodrowski

Working on *MARS ATTACKS* "was a really great opportunity to do a lot of different things and to use some color in ways that you don't ordinarily use," according to production designer Wynn Thomas, but there was no conscious effort to dupli-



Storyboard by Michael Jackson showing the Martians' comeuppance at the hands of rock 'n' roll-blaring boom boxes. Left: Jackson's board of the Martian ship interior.



cate the look of the bubblegum cards, "because Tim and I realized very early on from our discussions that it would be hard for all of the sets to have that look that was indicated in the cards. Part of the job of a production designer is to tie the whole look of the movie together visually. It would have been very hard to tie the White House into that—you can't paint it some strange color in order to match the look that was in the cards."

The approach that Burton and Thomas took was nevertheless based on the source. "If you look at the cards, each one has a primary graphic look that's making the statement," said Thomas. "So we decided to create each set very simply, to keep the set decoration to the mini-

mum, to point up the graphic aspect of each set, and to enhance that graphic with color where we possibly could. The War Room is a clear example: it's a very simple set in a way, but at the same time it's graphically appealing, and the idea was it would make the actors stand out in the space, as opposed to the scenery. Certainly, a War Room could be filled with computers and gadgetry, but we decided to play against all that and just keep the images very simple."

Adding that he and Burton opted for strong primary colors wherever they could, Thomas cited a couple of examples: "Traditionally, Mars is red, but usually it's a dusty red or a brick red. We used a primary red. The first set in the film is a Kentucky farm. We painted the farm house bright green and the barn a very bright red. So, where we could get away with it realistically, we went for broad, bright colors; otherwise, we decided to emphasize the graphics as opposed to the color."

Like everyone else involved in the film, Thomas cited 1950s

sci-fi flicks as a primary inspiration for his work on *MARS ATTACKS*. "Clearly, the Martian interiors are more influenced by *FORBIDDEN PLANET* than they are by 2001," he said. "I used a lot of research material from '30s and '40s sci-fi cartoons and graphics. That stuff is more constructivist, almost like Russian constructivist architecture. The idea was to create something in the spirit of *FORBIDDEN PLANET*."

Despite the extravagant sets, almost half the film was shot on location. "The challenge there was to find locations that were already deteriorating, so that we didn't have to go in there and bomb-out a building," joked Thomas. "We tried to find buildings that were already on their way to collapsing." He added, "Unlike *INDEPENDENCE DAY*, where the destruction is very serious, the effects of the Martian rays are not quite as serious in *MARS ATTACKS*: when they destroy something, they destroy it very beautifully, and the residue left behind is very colorful."

Thomas also found himself

designing Martian implements, like the surgical tools "used to hack up their victims," he said. "We had to invent quite a few weapons, but we ended up using only two. There was a time period when we were designing all kinds of things for the Martians to use, because it wasn't specified—the script in the very beginning was very broad. All those elements had to be designed so that it made some sense in terms of

their physical world. We deviated very far from the cards, but there's a childlike spirit to the cards, and that spirit is hopefully maintained in the production design.

Despite trying to make some sense of the Martian designs, Thomas stated that aesthetics were more ultimately important than utility. "We always thought of the Martians as very naughty kids, so it's playful, unsophisticated gadgetry," he explained, citing the ridiculously oversized Martian Death ray aimed at one unsuspecting old woman. "We worked up the design of that Martian Death Ray based on one of Tim's drawings," he added. "Not that he disliked what we were doing; he just had a particular idea about it."

For Thomas, the biggest challenge of the movie was tying the diverse settings together into a consistent visual look. "How do you make all the difference pieces fit visually?" he asked rhetorically. "Again, what we tried to do was reduce all the sets to the most simple, basic image. That was an approach we took in each world, with the

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but hadn't been able to see it."

To expose Burton to what he had been missing, Franco went to ILM and talked to some of the JUMANJI animators, who whipped up a little test of their own on spec using the JUMANJI background plate filmed to show the elephants trampling a car. The animators substituted Martians doing their thing to the innocent little auto, and Franco showed the results to Burton. "It was enough to show Tim that it was possible," said Franco. "It also became apparent that we were going to be able to do at least five times more animation."

With Burton convinced that CGI could do more for his film than the beloved stop-motion animation, the fledgling production had to face yet two more hurdles before the studio would give the green light. "We had to go back to the studio with the new budget," said Franco. "First, it involved telling them that we were going to change in mid-stream, that we weren't going to do what we set out to do, that the look they had signed-on for was going to be the same, but it was going to be accomplished in a different way. They had to swallow that first. With that went a lot of money that was already gone; the design of the Martians, the set design, a lot of stuff was still usable, but we had built and committed to a lot of puppets that we weren't going to use. We had built facilities and had a bunch of equipment that was intended for stop-motion animation. And all of a sudden, we were not going to do that."

"That was a hard pill for anyone to swallow when you've spent money that's not going to be used. But they felt our enthusiasm. They saw the test and realized what

"I had a lot of freedom,"
Tim Burton noted.
"With ILM, I didn't have
to do cumbersome
technical set-ups."



ILM's CGI Martian Queen, with one of the many alien instruments designed at the preproduction stage before the script was finalized.

we were going to do. They trusted the fact that ILM knew what they were doing, and were going to do what they said they would do. "The toughest part was me having to go to the stop-motion people, which was a considerable number—about 60 people who were involved, or were going to be involved—who were now unemployed."

Noted Burton, "In some ways, the technique really doesn't matter. I wanted to go for a 'feeling' of the stop motion that I grew up on. Now, we're able to achieve that feeling in a few different ways. We would have had more trouble with the stop motion. With these characters, where there's a lot of

the studio said okay on the movie," noted Franco, "the next thing they said was, 'Can we have it by Christmas?' That took another couple of weeks to figure out if that was possible. Then we thought, 'Is it a Christmas movie?' Yeah, it is, because it's a lot of fun. It's an event movie. It's huge! There's a lot of stuff in MARS ATTACKS! that is different from a lot of movies. All the previous computer animation has been driven to be photo realistic. We haven't done that. This movie has a whole different feel."

"On the one hand it's huge. There's nothing cheesy about it. It has a cheesiness in that it has the 'feel' of a '50s sci-fi movie.

Burton's Martian spaceship borrows the look of FORBIDDEN PLANET (1956). Left: Scanning in the stop-motion puppets for CGI animation work at ILM.



MARTIAN VICTIM

PIERCE BROSNAN

Suave James Bond on playing a clueless scientist.

By Frederick C. Szebin

In the star parade that passes across the screen in *MARS ATTACKS!*, each actor gets their time in the spotlight before the massacre moves merrily on. Pierce Brosnan, the new James Bond, plays Professor Donald Kessler, a dim little scientist who remains eternally hopeful of the alien's intentions, hoping for a new Renaissance even as he stands in the midst of the scorched remains of Martian fodder.

After his successful star turn as Bond, it was the prospect of working with director Tim Burton that led Brosnan choose a supporting role in a sci-fi invasion movie.

"He's the coolest guy in movies, I think," said Brosnan. "He's a unique talent. He comes from a background in graphics and animation, and carries those sensibilities with him into the work, the visuals. You become part of his tapestry, his world, and he has a great energy and a wonderful, wonderful eye for what's right, and a great ear for dialogue."

As Kessler, Brosnan makes the mistake of advising the President to greet the onslaught of Martians with open arms. "And of course," said Brosnan, "they land and blow the shit out of everybody."

Even in the throes of war, love is in bloom. Kessler falls for pop journalist Nathalie Lake, played by Sarah Jessica Parker. In the script, Parker's character is identified as an MTV Tabitha Soren-type, but the filmmakers had to drop the video music station's moniker.

"MTV, you foolish people!" admonished Brosnan. "Gonna have one of the coolest movies of the year and you could have been there. How the mighty grow. Anyway, Sarah Jessica Parker and I have a love interest; she works on this fashion show and interviews Kessler. She thinks I'm a very cool pipe-smoking dude."

But the Professor is actually terminally clueless, having a false faith in the invaders



Pierce Brosnan as the film's pipe-smoking professor is terminally clueless, with a groundless yet unshakeable faith in the Martians until the bitter end.

to the bitter end. "He doesn't get it at all," said Brosnan. "He doesn't get it even when his head is on a plate."

The Martians decide to play erector set with Kessler's and Lake's body parts for no other apparent reason than to show that they can do it. "My head is on a platter and her head is on the body of a Chihuahua," added Brosnan. "You play the scene as a love story. You forget everything else and play the scene, which is about my love for this woman and it appears that we're going down in flames; 'I love you, I love you.' And the rest is Tim Burton."

The cast Burton pulled together is one of the most impressive in film history, and despite all of his own personal success, film buff Brosnan couldn't help but be struck by the talent surrounding him. "My first day's work was in the Oval Office," he said. "First day, six-page scene. There was Jack, the Man, as the President; there was Glenn Close, young beautiful Natalie Portman, Mr. Rod Steiger, Paul Winfield, Martin Short. And yours truly. I was just gob-struck. Especially when you do the master shot, then you do all the close-ups and you look over and there's Jack behind the camera with all these amazing actors. It was wonderful."

"He is one of our greatest actors," Brosnan continued on Nicholson. "Whatever he touches turns to gold. He's mighty watch-

able, and his energy and presence is big. Every time he would come on the set they'd play 'Hail to the Chief.' It was terrifying. You get terrified before any job, every job. But this particular job is filled with all these people I respect, people I've watched. So, I'm sitting there with people I admire and I don't want to screw up. I'm sure Jack felt it as well. You could see it. When you work with people who are that good and talented, there's a certain giving and an ease. But, nevertheless on the first day's work I thought, 'What have I got myself into? Why am I doing this?' But you get the first take in the

can and you're off and running."

His role in Burton's homage to SF B-movies is an addition to Brosnan's diverse filmography which continues to grow with his recently released remake of *ROBINSON CRUSOE*, and the upcoming *DANTE'S PEAK*. His own production company will give the actor more roles to choose from to broaden his performing prospects.

"I trained as an actor to do everything I possibly could," said Brosnan. "I never limited myself, always seeing myself as a character actor and not a leading man. All my years in Hollywood, I suppose, made me a leading man, but first and foremost I'm an actor. Whether I'm playing a hero, or a supporting role it doesn't matter as long as it's a good script with good people."

"I've had great fortune," he continued. "I never expected Bond to come around again. It's been a glorious success which comes with a lot of pressure because then you have to rise to the occasion the next time. You don't want to disappoint the audience. I'm proud of *GOLDENEYE*. It took a lot of hard work on everyone's behalf, but there's a lot of other work I want to do. When you go into something like *MARS ATTACKS!*, when you're part of an ensemble, then the experience is richer. It feeds you as an actor and you don't get stale." □

It's very simple in its design and its very stark in its colors. It has a feel of the '50s because basically in the '50s they spent no money in terms of detail. There were black shapes and shadows, where ours is very textured and has a real awareness to it, but at the same time it's not detailed to the max. Some of the interiors are, of course. It just has a 'feel' of the '50s movies. It 'feels' cheesy. There's a nice way to say 'cheesy' and have it be a good thing. The film has a 'cheesy' feel, but it's high class. A top-drawer cheesiness," Franco laughed.

With a firm technological grasp of how to achieve his vision, the next hurdle for Burton and the production to face was casting. Not since Stanley Kramer's *IT'S A MAD, MAD, MAD, MAD WORLD* in 1963 has such a huge cast of big names been assembled for one picture. Even with his reputation in the industry for boxoffice and critical hits, Burton had trouble getting people together for this particular project.

"Franco helped by coming up with practical ways of executing these ideas on less money," said Gems. "Then Jack Nicholson was a great help because there was a problem getting the movie cast. We'd been working for a year, and the technical problems had been solved. Initially, there were casting problems because of the nature of the story. But Jack Nicholson loved the script. Because of him we got the ball rolling. The other actors signed on. The movie is a little bit strange and the actors would be nervous, but Nicholson wasn't nervous. He built this wave and everybody wanted to be in it."

Admitted Franco, "Actually it was a lot easier than you think, because once

"They're anarchistic," noted director Tim Burton. "It's not that Martians are bad. They are just having fun."



Jack Nicholson as the President reacts to ILM's CGI effect of a Martian probe. Inset: Probe pre-production sketch by J. Carson.

the word got out and people started hearing what kind of project it was—a lot of cameos, a couple of weeks work with Tim Burton on a big project—it was fairly easy to get everybody on the same wavelength. Logistically it was tricky working around people's schedules, but in terms of getting people's interest, that wasn't a problem at all. And the cast was really having a great time, which made it fun for us.

"I think the first two people to jump on board were Pierce Brosnan and Sarah Jessica Parker, then Lucas Haas and Sylvia Sidney. When Jack became involved, it became a little bit easier. He lent stature to the project. I think one of the things people are going to want to see is Jack Nicholson as the

President of the United States." But the intriguing cast aren't the only stars of this picture. The real feature players are, let's face it, the Martians themselves—skull-faced, big-brained, green-skinned little meanies. Burton's idea of character development and motivation for the attacking Martians is to view them as being totally, well, alien. "Part of the energy of doing this was trying to get the spirit of those Martians and what they do," said Burton. Another thing that was intriguing was that these are characters who you don't really understand. They don't speak English, they do strange things. It's like getting used to a new culture, thinking that you can figure them out, but you can't. That's one thing I like about it.

"All of a sudden, you're see-



ing things from a new perspective. The story's got that kind of mix. You think you understand them, but then you don't. They're very anarchistic that way. It's not that they're bad, they're just having fun."

Burton's intention had always been to keep the Martian's violence in check, not wishing to cross the line into the hardcore gore of the cards. Instead, the director

Right: In the Pentagon war room President Jack Nicholson prepares to shake hands with the Martian ambassador. Left: Nicholson's President proves ineffectual.



chose to depict a '50s sci-fi violence; overstated, yet cartoonish. Just how the MPAA ratings board will react, though, was anyone's guess.

"In my heart, I don't worry about it," Burton said of facing the infamous censors. "In reality, I'm always nervous [about getting a rating] because I feel like things have gotten more arbitrary in certain ways. It's hard for me. I grew up watching things like *THE BRAIN THAT WOULDN'T DIE* on Saturday afternoon television. There's a guy with his arm ripped off and his blood smeared all over the wall. I was eight years old while watching this on TV. I never saw it as negative. I find that stuff, when it's not rooted in reality, to be cathartic. I have a personal problem with movies that feature people shooting guns at other people and telling jokes. That's a whole separate style of movie.

"In *MARS ATTACKS!* with Martians shooting ray guns and turning people into skeletons, I don't think that's so harsh. To me, it's in the spirit of that old style sci-fi. It's a little bit removed. I don't think there's going to be a problem [with the ratings board], but we'll wait and see."

Noted Franco, "It's not going to be as gory as the cards because the cards were presented as being a bit more serious than this movie is. I think if you take what's in those cards and think of it as a joke, then it's not gory at all. That's what's happening with this movie. Yes, there are ray blasts, and yes, people are turned into skeletons, and yes, things blow up. But I don't think 'gory' is the word to use in describing this movie. 'Fantastic' might be a better word, or 'fantasy.'

“Martians shooting ray guns is removed,” Burton said, “[Violence], when it’s not rooted in reality, is cathartic.”



Alien in disguise: Lisa Marie as the Martian girl. Inset: Director Tim Burton's design sketch for the film's Queen of Outer Space.

"We have apprehensions about the ratings board. You always have that because, in regard to this film, you must get the joke. If you get the joke and completely jump on board with reckless abandon as all the cast members did, then everything will be okay. If you don't get it, then there's a problem; there are people on fire, people turned into skeletons, all that kind of stuff. I think there's a slight concern [about the rating], but when you add some Danny Elfman music, it won't seem so bad. The colors in this movie are really bright and vivid, too. It's not dark and bloody, with guts."

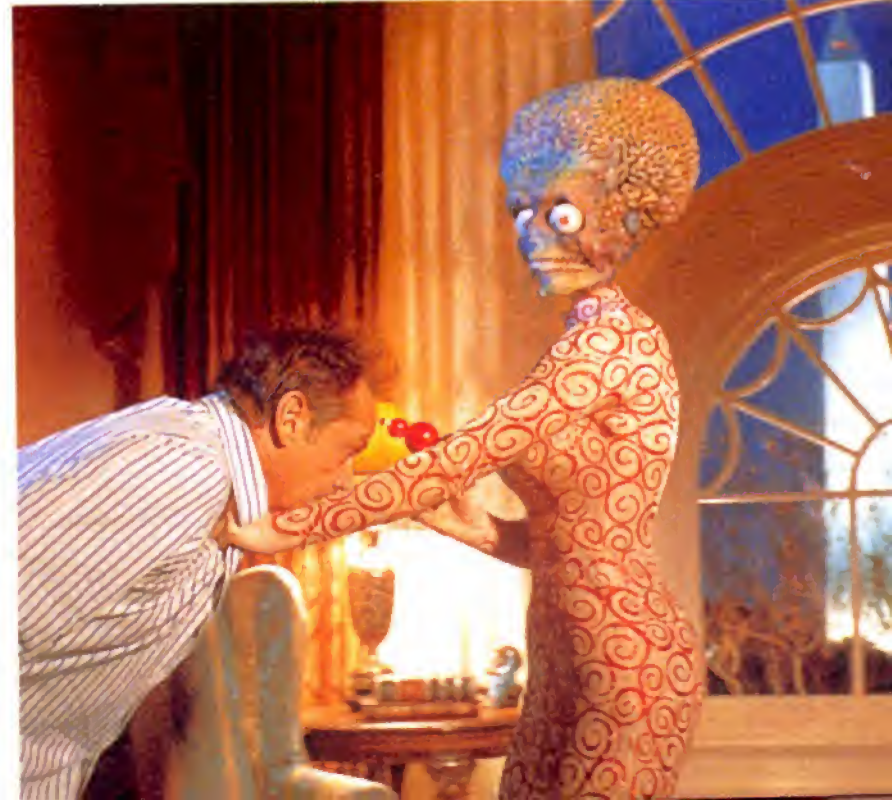
One thing that doesn't seem to have been too much of a concern for the production was the great success of an earlier alien invasion epic this past summer. Without a firm grasp of what exactly Burton and company are planning with *MARS ATTACKS!*, one is tempted to think that after *INDEPENDENCE DAY*, any other invasion epic this year would simply be redundant. But scribe Gems puts the matter into perspective. "I don't think it matters," he stated. "A year from now, I'll tell the whole truth about it and people will be shocked. Something happened that was unethical." When pressed, Gems refused to elaborate further.

"ID4 was a fantastic show—I loved the blowing up of Manhattan," he said. "That movie was like a trailer for *MARS ATTACKS!*. We should be very grateful! I enjoyed a lot of ID4. I enjoyed *STARGATE*, too—I like cheesy films. It doesn't bother me that ID4 is full of holes, but that's be-

side the point. It doesn't matter that the aliens are Mac compatible. The fact that it's irrational is a lot of fun.

"I don't think [the success of ID4] will be a bad thing for our movie. It's the same premise, obviously. The difference is *MARS ATTACKS!* is a comedy. It has a completely different feel. You could say it's like *FAIL SAFE* and *DR. STRANGE-LOVE*—they're completely different films with the same premise and almost the exact same story, treated differently [released months apart in 1964]. People who see *STRANGELove* would never think of

Jack Nicholson as the frazzled President James Dale, getting a Martian ultimatum from Lisa Marie in the White House, CGI effects by ILM.



MARTIAN VICTIMS

THE HAWK & THE DOVE

Paul Winfield on challenging Steiger's warmonger.

By Steve Biodrowski

In *MARS ATTACKS*, each character sees the impending approach of the Martians not from a global perspective but through the prism of his or her own particular philosophy—whether it be scientific, metaphysical, or entrepreneurial. All human foibles are held up for ridicule, as advocates of each advance their personal theories, only to see them fail miserably, after which they meet a gruesome death. In the end, no one has anything close to approaching the right answer, and only dumb luck saves humanity. Nowhere is this more evident than in the dichotomy between the United States President's two top military advisers: the hawkish General Decker (Rod Steiger) and the peace-loving General Casey, played by Paul Winfield.

The debate, of course, is over how to welcome the aliens—whether with open arms or blazing guns. It might seem that the film is advocating a militaristic approach, because, as its very title indicates, peace turns out to be hardly a viable option. Did Winfield feel as if his character were merely set up to take a fall, since his diplomatic approach doesn't work out? "Not many things do—in life and in this movie!" he said, adding, "Everyone has their expectations of what this landing is going to mean and how it's going to change their lives. That's what the whole movie is about. We don't spend a lot of time in the Martian spaceship. It's about how the humans react in a myriad of different ways. I'm just one aspect, but I'm part of a pair: the



Acting greats Paul Winfield and Rod Steiger as battling generals are diametrically opposed in their response to the Martian invasion.

hawks and the doves. And there's an element of personal ambition: I'm trying to get Steiger out of there. He represents the old-fashioned way, and I think it's a new diplomatic age. I want his job! But you can't come right out and say that to a cranky old general."

Winfield laughed at the description of his character as "peace-loving" and explained, "I think I'm peace-loving in contrast to Rod Steiger, who's a star ahead of me. He's war-loving: 'We should blow these suckers out of the air!'"

Although he advocates diplomacy, Winfield's Casey does not escape the carnage that engulfs everyone else. "Are you kidding?" he laughed. "I am one of the first to die. I've died so many times that it's second nature. I'd like to put together a reel of my death scenes. I like to think it's because they can't afford to pay me! Or maybe it's just that I have gotten so good at it."

When the Martians first land, while a translation of the Martian ambassador's voice in-

sists the visitors have come in peace, Casey symbolically releases a white dove. Two Martians fire on the dove, then turn and blast a hole in the General's stomach. So much for peace!

If it's any consolation to pacifists and diplomats, the warmongering General Decker, who advocates the militaristic option from the start, is no more successful than Casey at dealing with the Martians: he ends up miniaturized to pipsqueak size and stomped to death by an alien attacker. Said Steiger of the role, "He's real gung-ho: 'America, this and that!' He wants to kill—go, attack, fight! In fact, Tim came up to me in the scene where the Martians step on me and said, 'The speech is a little short. What can you do?' So I said the lines that were written and then went on, 'The old glory will wave, I promise you! We will never lose—we will go on! You will never conquer us or the NRA!' I had to get a shot at the rifle association. I hope they don't cut it out."

Although the on-screen characters may have been in doomed conflict, behind-the-scenes was exactly the opposite. "It was like a play pen, actually," said Winfield of working with the high-powered ensemble cast. "There was very little tension on the set. Even though there's \$60-million riding on Jack Nicholson's performance, he didn't seem phased by it. I might have a few worry lines here and there!"

"When they told me all the people involved, it really turned my head around," he continued. "It's unusual to have an all-star cast in a science-fiction romp. Usually, the budget is spent on the effects, so there's very little left over for any sort of leading or respected actors in this sort of thing—Sigourney Weaver, I didn't mean that!"

What, if any, conclusions are we to make about the futility of human endeavor against overwhelming circumstances? Said Winfield, "This particular script

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Paul Winfield is peace-loving General Casey. Is the resemblance to a recent real-life Chief of Staff intentional?



MARTIAN MUSICIAN

COMPOSER DANNY ELFMAN

On Burtonizing the golden sci-fi scores of the past.

*By Frederick C. Szebin and
Steve Biodrowski*

For Danny Elfman, former rocker and now award-winning film composer extraordinaire, *MARS ATTACKS!* marks his seventh collaboration with Burton in a decade. From *PEE-WEE'S BIG ADVENTURE*, through *BEETLEJUICE*, Burton's two swings at the *BATMAN* legend and into *EDWARD SCISSORHANDS* and *THE NIGHTMARE BEFORE CHRISTMAS*, the visual and musical stylists have teamed to help create some of the finest fantasy entertainment of the past ten years.

Away from Burton, Elfman has been no slouch, scoring *DARKMAN*, *DICK TRACY*, *DEAD PRESIDENTS*, and earlier this year, *MISSION: IMPOSSIBLE* and *THE FRIGHTENERS*.

For *MARS ATTACKS!*, Elfman was hired early on in the process and was able to actually visit the set, a rare opportunity for a composer who usually comes on a project once filming has been done.

"You get to a certain point where, for better or worse, you end up getting hired way in advance," said Elfman of the film composer's lot. "More often than not these days I end up getting hired like I did on *MISSION: IMPOSSIBLE*, where I just dropped in out of the blue. There was already a rough cut. For *MARS ATTACKS!*, they were shooting in Kansas and I got on the set. It was fun."

Elfman admits that being involved in a film so early doesn't necessarily mean anything to the man who makes the music. "I've never written a note from a script," the composer admitted. "I once tried and thought I had all these great ideas and I saw the rough cut of the movie and had to scrap everything I'd done! I learned right then and there that there's absolutely no point. You can take the same script, shoot it 20 different ways stylistically and get 20 different scores. The music follows the image.

"As soon as I see the footage, I hear the music," Elfman continued. "If I try to start thinking of ideas early on it ends up just being a waste of time. It might even be harm-



Danny Elfman, Tim Burton's Music Man, wrote the scores from *PEE-WEE'S BIG ADVENTURE* to *THE NIGHTMARE BEFORE CHRISTMAS*.

ful. It might get me thinking along a certain line and the movie's not that way. Then there might be a tendency to want to force something in that doesn't really fit. I think the best way is to empty my head completely when I see a rough cut for the first time and just look for those very spontaneous ideas. I think the best stuff I get comes from that approach. It's still fun visiting the set. You get an idea, an inkling of what you're up against, and if nothing else, it gets your excitement up. I saw the Martians in an early rough cut while they were still filming. It gave me a feel for the tone and pacing, like on *BATMAN*—I got to see an assembly of the first half of the movie. It was enough to get the feeling of Gotham, and Gotham was what the tone of the *BATMAN* theme was all about. In *MARS ATTACKS!*, it was the same thing. I actually saw the Martians hopping around a little. It was like, 'Okay, they're frisky little critters. They're not like your typical, lethargic, slow-moving bugs. They scoot around.'"

In previous collaborations with Burton,

Elfman would devise separate themes for each main character. But *MARS ATTACKS!* offers an ensemble cast and hopes to recapture the feel of '50s sci-fi movies. In this case, the soundtrack required special handling.

"I don't imagine I'll be doing any themes for any of the characters," Elfman said. "I don't think there'll be a 'President's Theme.' I think it's going to be more the tone of the film will be expressed through the music, more as it might have been in a classic science fiction movie. They generally didn't give, in multi-character stories, themes to individual characters. There would be a theme that invoked alien invasion, there would be a theme that invoked paranoia, or defeat, or conquering. The score would be more broad-based, and if there was a love story, there would be a love theme. *MARS ATTACKS!* would be very similar.

"It's fun tapping into all the stuff I loved while growing up," Elfman continued on the pulp-SF influences of *MARS ATTACKS!* "For Jonathan [Gems] a favorite would be *EARTH VS. THE FLYING SAUCERS*, for Tim it might be *MONSTER ZERO*, with me it's *THE MYSTERIANS*," he laughed. "All these things are in there. The beauty of the way Tim directs is at a certain level of take-off, but very quickly you see that it isn't really. It's very Tim. His personality goes into the thing so strongly that it becomes his own thing. That's why I like *MARS ATTACKS!*; it's the difference between paying homage and a parody. Tim is definitely paying homage to the concept of these trading cards and the films he grew up on, but he's not doing a parody of the films as much as he's totally having fun with it. In other words, 'These are all of the things I would have liked to have seen if I were back then.'"

One key element to the sound and feel of the science fiction movies back then was the pre-synthesizer instrument called the theramin. Elfman realized that a proper homage to those thrilling popcorn chillers of yesteryear wouldn't be complete without this particular noise-maker.



Troops defend the White House. Elfman was inspired by *THE DAY THE EARTH STOOD STILL* as a child to become a film composer.

"I wouldn't dream of going into the session without a theramin," he said. "The score that started me, that led me to becoming a film composer, was *THE DAY THE EARTH STOOD STILL*. That was the first film where I noticed the music and was aware as a kid that the music isn't just there by magic, that there was a name attached to it. I started to look for that name. When I saw Bernard Herrmann's name on other science fiction movies as I was growing up I went, 'Oh boy! This is gonna be good!' It was an awareness that there was a difference in the music; there was a personality, an individual, and it did make a difference. When his music was in the movies, they were better movies! It would be inconceivable for me not to be paying homage to that. What started the whole thing was a flying saucer movie, although a whole different kind of movie," Elfman laughed.

"My orchestrator bought a theramin recently," Elfman continued, "and for my birthday, he bought me one as a kit and I'm putting it together now. We've all got our theramins! As a useful instrument, it became cliched in the '50s because it was the first totally unique instrument to enter the palette in an era before electronic instruments. It was amazing as something totally new. It represented a new age. It didn't sound like any instrument in the orchestra. It's understandable to me why Miklos Rozsa and Bernard Herrmann gravitated to

it very quickly. But, like anything new, it became overused. Look at drum machines. That started in the '80s and they still haven't given it up."

It's never been a problem with the music-driven Elfman to work with the visually-driven Burton, whose articulation in music rates about nil. "The joy of working with Tim is the inarticulation," said Elfman. "We're both intuition and sensibility-driven people. I do less verbalizing about the context of his movies than anybody I work with, yet we end up communicating very effectively on a more instinctive level. Very often, I see what he's after; I get a kind of look or attitude and I go, 'I get it.' When we're on the scoring stage I can just tell from his body language. I'll do a take, sit down with the conductor, go through about eight or nine changes as we're rehearsing. Then Tim will say, 'I have a few notes.' He'll give me his notes and I say, 'Yeah, I just did all of those.'"

All a composer can hope for, said Elfman, is that your vision of the movie is as close to the director's as possible. "If your sensibility is off, then you've got a real problem and there's no way around that. I might have a little more of a direct connection with Tim's movies because our sensibilities are very close, as opposed to coming in cold on a project where I don't know the director, his sensibilities, and I have to go through the process of learning them. □

"I don't give a shit how many films are about aliens attacking," said Franco, "They're not even close to Tim's."



FAIL SAFE."

Noted Franco, "I think we were aware of [ID4] from the very first meeting I had. We made sure to separate ourselves from that. From that moment it became something to think about, but—hey—Tim Burton is Tim Burton. I don't give a shit how many films are about aliens attacking the earth. None of them are going to be even close to what Tim Burton's is. So, immediately there wasn't a concern for me. Once the studio heads saw animation tests on the Martians it was quite obvious that we were going to be completely different from *INDEPENDENCE DAY*. Anybody who knows Tim would not be concerned that we were going to make a movie just like somebody else's."

Burton was aware of the competition from the start. "I had heard about it [ID4] right before we had started filming. I try never to get too involved or interested in other things when I'm developing something because I'm making my own thing. There wasn't a case of the studios competing with each other, like when someone

says, 'We're going to do volcano movies,' and everyone races out with their own version of that idea. The studio didn't show much concern about [ID4] either. I think they feel confident, as I do. I haven't seen *INDEPENDENCE DAY*, so I don't really know. I'm concerned about making *MARS ATTACKS!* I'm not really concerned about another movie."

Special effects had been shooting since Warners gave Burton and Franco the go-ahead. To help the actors when dealing with the Martian menace on a one-on-one basis a few costumes were whipped up for stand-ins to wear as effects reference points. "They actually had the hardest job," Burton said of the stand-ins. "I have to hand it to them. They were amazing. It kind of reminded me of *HOWARD THE DUCK* at times. It was basically like trying to direct Disneyland characters, but with hardcore action."

Burton said he was awed to be working with such a high-powered cast. "You have to wonder what the hell you're doing with all these great performers. They made it fun. I had a great time. I really enjoyed seeing

Planning the defense of Earth, in keeping with the movie's bubblegum card inspiration, director Tim Burton sought bold, striking set designs.



MARTIAN VICTIM

MICHAEL J. FOX

Marty McFly on dabbling in another sci-fi universe.

By Frederick C. Szebin

In *MARS ATTACKS!*, Michael J. Fox plays vain Global News Network reporter Jason Stone, one of the first to witness the Martian onslaught first hand. "It's kind of fun to play a character who's supposed to report on what's happening and is really much more concerned with himself and his hair," said Fox. "And his hair, by the way, is perfect. Winds blow, my clothes are falling off, Martians are landing, explosions are happening and his hair is perfect. Joey Zapata, the hair artiste, in order to secure my hair like this, used all kinds of things that I don't even want to know the source of. There's probably newt saliva and all kinds of crap in there."

Fox didn't have the chance to research his role of vacuous TV reporter due to timing conflicts with his ABC series *SPIN CITY*, but the actor admitted to having no problem in finding his character. "When I got to work [on *MARS ATTACKS!*] I was thinking, 'Boy, I should go and follow some reporter around and do all that stuff,' then I thought, 'Nah, I know who these dints are.' They're such idiots and we're forced to watch them every day. They have no clue what's happening. I can relate to that."

Director Tim Burton and screenwriter Jonathan Gems refused to give the Martians reasons for doing what they do, basically stating, "They are who they are, they do what they do." But Fox, for his own peace of mind, has his personal reason for the attack.

"Cause we're bored," he stated. "The human race is bored. We're waiting for the next thing, and it might as well come from space. I really think that's it. There's so much going on in the world right now that we don't want to deal with. That's why movies exist, to take us to another place, to put us in situations that we've never seen and can't imagine. But that's a very short list, because we've seen it all. A Martian at-



Michael J. Fox as a vacuous TV reporter shares breakfast with Sarah Jessica Parker and a Chihuahua. Fox is one of the first to be blown away.

tack is one thing we haven't seen. This movie has got a great cynicism. One person thinks, 'Oh, this is wonderful, the Martians are coming,' and someone else says, 'Nah, they're gonna blow our asses away.' And you know, we deserve it. We have it coming to us. We're scum. 'Die, Earthling scum.'"

Fox's decision to do the movie, like so many of the other cast members, came down to two words—Tim Burton. "How many chances in your life are you going to get to work with somebody like Tim Burton?" he said. "When I told my seven-year-old son that I might do this Tim Burton movie, he flipped out. He knows Tim's whole resume. He read it off to me, including *FRANKENWEENIE*. My son would have killed me if I didn't do it."

"Another reason is, as a kid, one of my favorite movies was *IT'S A MAD, MAD, MAD, MAD WORLD*, and the idea of being in a film like that, where you just never know who's going to pop up and what's going to happen to them was really an exciting prospect. Those things combined, and the fact that it was pretty easy for me to do; it's just a couple days here and there. I couldn't resist it."

Fox compared working with Burton to directors Bob Zemeckis (*BACK TO THE FUTURES 2 & 3*) and Peter Jackson (*THE FRIGHTENERS*). Noted Fox, "They have

two things in common; one is that they're incredible visionaries. You get within about two feet of their heads and you can hear the humming. And the other is that they're all really nice guys, real approachable."

Fox noted that it was amazing to work amid a cast of such seasoned pros. "The amount of experience this crew has had is astounding," said Fox. "They've been all over the world. To me, it's like an episode of *THE LOVE BOAT*. I worked about 10 days all together, spread out over about a month, so it's a pretty tight experience for me. Everybody on this picture had what they describe in the mili-

tary as the 10,000-yard stare. Everybody looks like they've been through it. We were on the set and, I swear to God, a miniature tornado comes flying through the set! Nobody moved, they just covered their coffee. They're really hard."

Because of his experience with Zemeckis and Jackson, Fox had become adept at acting to virtually nothing where special effects would later fill the space. Burton, he noted, was particularly good at helping him visualize the non-existent threats, the most unnerving of which was his own on-screen demise. "In this whole parade of familiar actors," said Fox, "I believe I'm the first one to just get his crap completely blown away. I don't last long. It's really exciting and I think it'll be a great sequence. I've heard Tim describe it several times, and there's nothing like having Tim Burton gleefully describe your demise to you to really make your day: 'Oh, it'll be great! You'll run along and you're blown up and your arm will fly off.'"

"This is really a cool movie," Fox summed up. "This has been a great experience. I can't wait to see this. Here's a feeling of being part of an event. It's one of those movies that I would go see if I wasn't in it, and that's a short list. The list of movies that I'm in that I'd go see is an even shorter list." □

these people work. They all had such good spirits. I had all these great actors running through a field screaming. There's something funny about that.

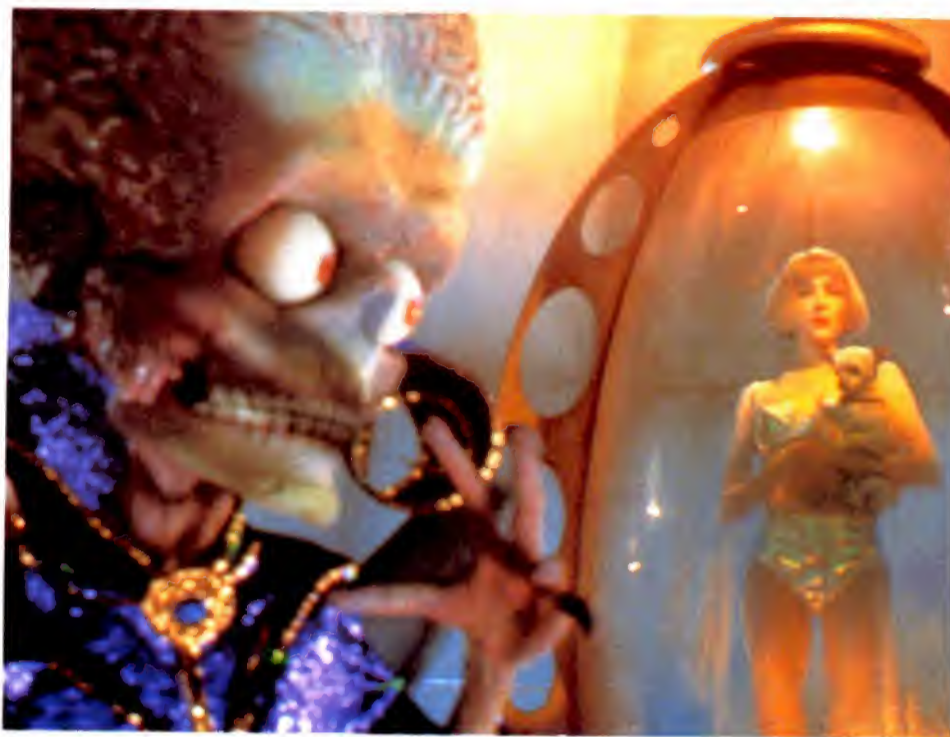
"I was very, very lucky working with these people. It was something nobody will see, but I will never, ever forget it; all these great actors acting to absolutely nothing. It's like when you were a kid playing pretend—watching these people who are Academy Award-winners, some of them just acting to nothing. I had no real hard-core Method people. 'I can't see the Martians! Where are they? What's my motivation?' Being chased by little green men, that's your motivation! Everybody got into it and they were great. It made filming a real pleasure. It was truly surreal to see all these people in a room at the same time."

The production went as smoothly as such a large production can be expected to go. Only one tight situation really stuck out in producer Franco's mind as making the production a trying time. "One of our biggest endeavors

was to be out in the Arizona location where the Martians first land on Earth. Logistically, it was a tough deal getting there, setting up. We had to feed all these people. We were in a dry lake bed in the red rock desert outside Kingman, Arizona. In Arizona, there's a Holiday Inn, a Day's Inn; there's not a lot around. We were busing people in from Las Vegas.

"It was really hot. It rained out there for like the first time in 160,000 years! We ended up losing about three days because of the weather. We wanted to shoot there earlier, but we were afraid it was going to be too cold in the desert. We

“The movie and the cards have a Christmas spectrum,” Burton said of the release date. “Red planet, green deathray!”



Mars Needs Woman: an image of Sarah Jessica Parker as fashion channel reporter Natalie Portman with her dog conjured up in the Martian space ship.

ended up deciding to shoot later in the schedule when the weather was okay, but then it rained."

With the speeded-up schedule, MARS ATTACKS! and a locked-in mid-December release date looming, making the process of audience previews problematic. "The problem with a movie like this, and I've been through it so much—I even went through it on BEETLEJUICE—is that my previews have never gone well," admitted Burton. "The preview audience will only see a movie like this with half-finished effects. I've never shown a preview audience a movie like that." "When I

gized by working on the movie. I'm very impressed with the way the effects are turning out. Being a stop-motion man myself, I'm really impressed by what the CGI people are doing. It's at a point where it's really incredible right now."

All that remains is to answer the question, is MARS ATTACKS! really fit to be a Christmas movie? "Absolutely!" answered Burton. "I like fantasy-sci-fi. The spirit of the movie is not as horrific as the cards. But the cards too—you can look at the colors and they do kind of have a Christmas spectrum!" Burton laughed. "Red planet, green death ray!" □

Glenn Close (left) as First Lady Nathalie Lake. Right, Brosnan attempts to open the lines of communication amid the charred skeletal remains of Congress.



MARTIAN EFFECTS

SPECIAL EFFECTS

ILM shows off CGI to stop-motion fan Burton.

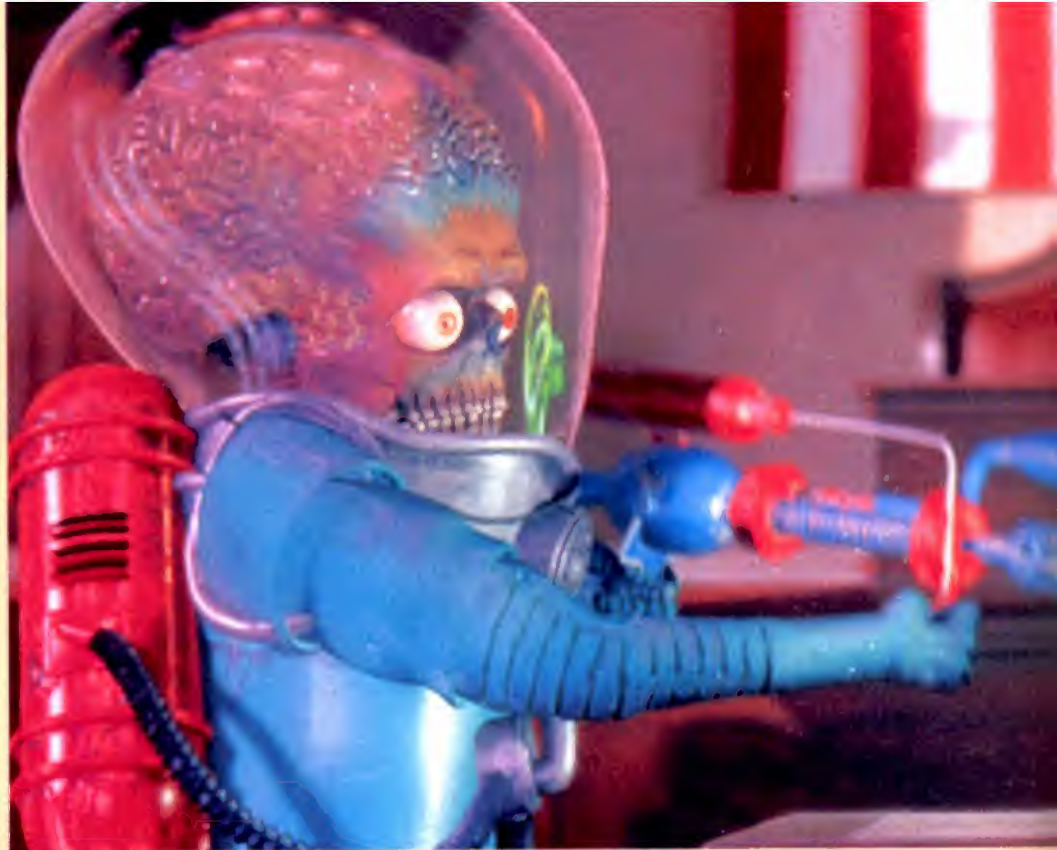
By Steve Biodrowski

When Industrial Light and Magic was first approached to work on Tim Burton's *MARS ATTACKS*, they were asked to composite stop-motion Martians with live-action footage of the all-star cast. "I just saw a lot of trouble," said effects supervisor Jim Mitchell of that approach. "There were so many technical issues, so many hurdles they were going to have to overcome. The fact that Tim wanted to shoot the film in anamorphic was presenting a problem for the stop-motion guys, who don't usually shoot in Panavision. There were is-

Stepping on a victim of their miniaturization, ILM's Martians squashed Burton's stop-motion plans.

sues of being able to do camera moves with the live-action; they were going to have to do all the tracking in the camera in the computer, anyway. At that point, you're in the realm of creating a completely synthetic set that matches the live action, so we might as well put the Martians in there and start animating around all the different characters played by Jack Nicholson, Tom Jones, and everybody. You almost get all that compositing technology for free by rendering the Martians in the computer."

At the time, Mitchell and Mark Miller, the visual effects producer, were already working with *MARS ATTACKS!* producer Larry Franco on their previous effort, *JUMANJI*, supplying rampaging computer generated animals. While finishing post-production on that film, they decided to pursue the idea of creating the Martians with computer graphics, as well. "We started a little test," recalled Mitchell. "We didn't have any concept artwork at that point, but the trading cards are out there—they're your best model sheet around. We built a Martian in the computer and put it in a little background we had. The idea was that, in addition to compositing, we could present the possibility that we could do the Martians when they were in the exterior, live-action environment. We showed Larry some stuff while he was still here working on *JUMANJI*, and then we pur-



Industrial Light and Magic's CGI Martians blast the U.S. law-makers. ILM demonstrated the advantages of CGI to Tim Burton, a long-time advocate of

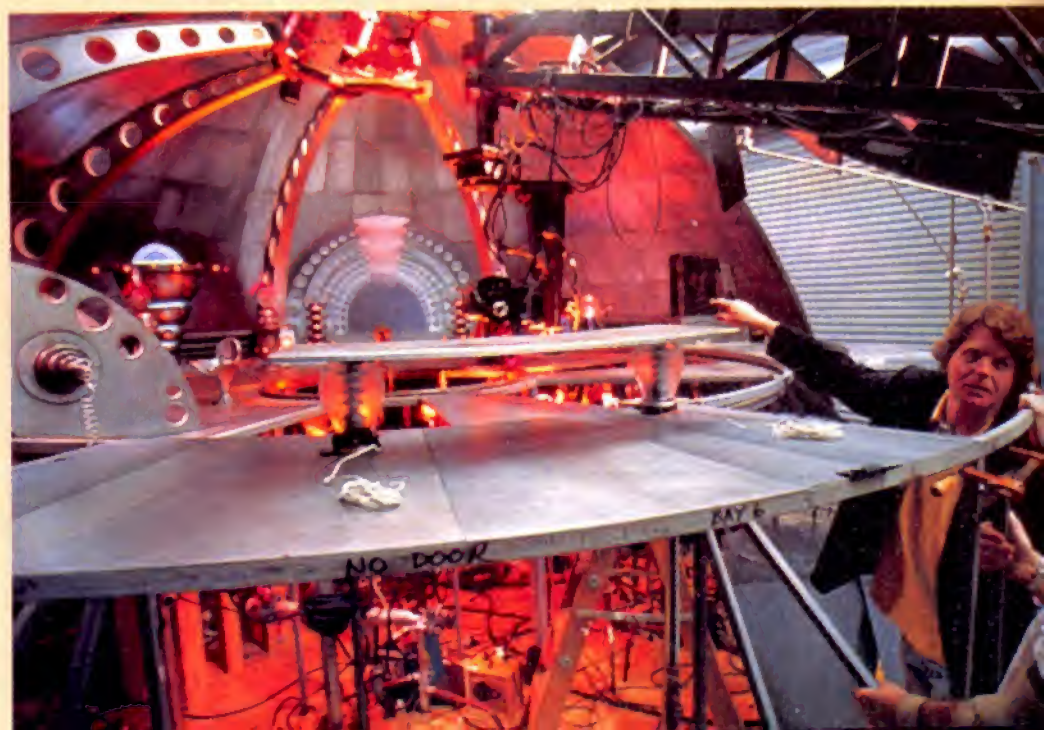
sued it even further with an additional test, which got a little bit more elaborate with the Martian model."

One hurdle was convincing director Tim Burton to abandon his beloved stop-motion for a type of effect he was not certain was aesthetically appropriate for the job. Said Mitchell, "Certainly, there's a quirkiness to how things move in stop-motion that just happens by the nature of how you shoot it, frame by frame, but what we wanted to impress on Tim was that you don't have to lose that just because you're doing it in the computer, that we could retain a lot of that quirkiness even while animating it in the computer. Much of what Tim doesn't like about the computer is that everything's so graceful and smooth, but in the hands of the right animators, you can still develop the characters and

make them whatever you want. Tim's idea of these things was, basically, that they're a force of nature and they have a reptilian nature about them. That's what we tried to put into our tests, and it worked."

The original plan called for interiors of the Martian spaceships to be shot with the stop-motion Martians on miniature sets—which meant, theoretically, that no compositing would be necessary. However, even in this case, there were advantages to CGI. Mitchell pointed out, "Ultimately, a lot of the interiors of the spaceships would require many effects. Even if they'd done it stop-motion, with today's technology, a lot of it was going to end up in the computer. Once we decided to do the Martians in the computer, a lot of things became more efficient, like that fact that they were shooting rays in almost every shot. It

Visual effects supervisor Jim Mitchell on the miniature Martian spaceship set.





Originally approached to do the composites of stop-motion Martians, stop-motion, who produced puppet feature **THE NIGHTMARE BEFORE CHRISTMAS**.

“It’s an indication of incredible things to come,” noted ILM’s Steve Williams. “Now nothing’s impossible.”



from having the aliens interact with Earthlings. Said Mitchell, “That was a very enjoyable part of creating the Martians: you had almost two different characterizations—when they’re on the space ship, they’re in their own environment. They take on a different attitude—more laid back, kicking back in their chairs, watching the television. There’s almost another movie, when we just watch the Martians at home. The work that we’ve done on the interior space ship becomes more pure animation at that point. Their interaction of sitting in chairs and picking up objects is almost pure CG, except for the actual background plate. We built some seventy computer graphics models, not just Martians but elements that they’re reacting with and any props they’re holding onto, like these little surgical instruments—whereas if you did that in live-action you’d be pulling some element on a string; you get more involved in physical effects to make the Martians interact with the live-action set.”

When it came to creating these interactive CGI props, ILM was allowed to embellish on the designs that were already in place. “Tim’s given us a lot of freedom to develop these characters and add to what al-

ready existed,” said Mitchell. “We got involved in designing different apparatuses for the Martians. For instance, when they are putting on their suits, they get into this huge, crushing cylinder, and they pop out as suited Martians. We just came up with designs, and it was easy to follow what had previously been done. Our art director, Mark Morris, is an avid fan of ’50s sci-fi flicks; he’s a walking encyclopedia of films like **EARTH VS. THE FLYING SAUCERS**. Obviously, you take a lot of your cues off that, because Tim does as well. Any time we had the chance to come up with something new, there was a lot of basis for it in those old, classic films. You never had a chance to deviate from what Tim had already imagined. It all came from a design standpoint; Tim’s really strong in design.”

Mitchell concluded, “It was a big attraction for me to do a project like this with Tim Burton, to have the thrill of doing this stuff, taking these characters and making them come alive. Hooking up with Tim Burton, it’s real easy to get involved in how these characters act and run. It was a big opportunity to show Tim that computer graphics were going to be the way.” □

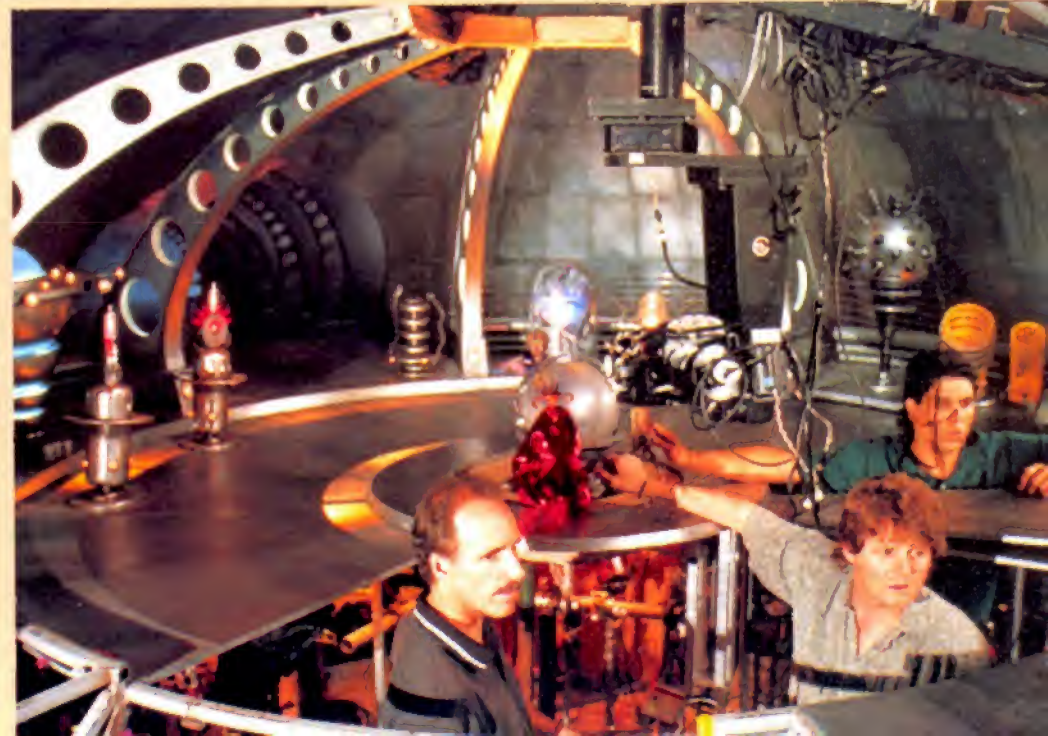
was like turning on a switch for us to say, ‘Blast the green ray here and blast the red ray there.’ In stop-motion, one hurdle they had was that every time they wanted to animate the head, they were going to have to remove the glass helmet of their space suits. That wasn’t an issue for us at all. We were able to recreate the glass and the reflections off the glass, and we wouldn’t have to take off the helmet to move an eyebrow!”

Although the stop-motion approach was abandoned, much of the pre-production work, including production design and the miniature Martian sets, found its way into the film. “A lot of that had been set in place before we even got involved,” explained Mitchell. “They were in production a few months at the point we were awarded the job, so a lot of that stuff was

already being built by the stop-motion animators. They had built this quarter-scale ship model. We still had to look at it like it was just another live-action set. We shot all the background plates of the ship with a motion-control camera, so that we were able to track all the camera information. Basically, we still were able to use the puppets in the sense of blocking out where they would be and what the camera framing would be. We went from the storyboards, a little crude animatic of the puppets inside the quarter scale model, and that gave us a lot of the lighting cues that Pat Sweeny, our director of photography on the miniature stuff, shot. We approached it very much like it was just another live-action set, except it was quarter scale.”

Working in the Martian environment was quite different

Below: Martian puppet used for computer graphics reference. Right: Effects cinematographer Pat Sweeney, Mitchell and gaffer Michael Olague shoot plates.



WES

The master of

By Lawrence French

WARNING! SCREAM contains many suspenseful and frightening scenes, some of which are discussed in this article. If you wish to be totally surprised by the film's shocking secrets, please do not read this article until after viewing the film.

When was the last time you saw a really scary movie? For both director Wes Craven and first-time screenwriter Kevin Williamson, it has been far too long, and something they intend to rectify when their new terror tale, **SCREAM** is unveiled by Miramax/Dimension Films, on December 20th.

For Williamson, the script came to life when he was faced with a very scary situation of his own: he was broke and needed money to make his rent and car payments. "I had sold my first script, **KILLING MRS. TINGLE**, to Interscope," said Williamson, "but it got bogged down in development hell. Then, my unemployment had run out and I desperately needed money. I had already written an opening sequence for a movie, which was really terrifying, so I thought, 'If I just add a story onto this 25 page sequence, I could probably sell it to Roger Corman for \$5,000.' I had friends who were making Corman films, and I had even acted in a couple of them, so that was my initial game plan."

Luckily for Williamson, the quality of his finished script (which was initially titled **SCARY MOVIE**), was on a much higher level than a Roger Corman low-budget production, and it quickly became a hot item in Hollywood's executive suites. "I had the story already in my head," said Williamson, "so I just sat down and wrote it over a long weekend. It's a spin on all these slasher horror films, and I filled it with a lot of inside stuff that I think horror movie experts will really appreciate. But I didn't think my agents would quite get it. In fact, I was too scared to give it to the head agent, so I gave it to the junior agent, instead. They felt we could do a lot better than Roger Corman, and it would probably sell for big money. They sent it out on a Monday morning, and by Tuesday, a bidding war had broken out between Paramount, Oliver Stone's **Ixtlan** productions, and Miramax."

When the dust had settled, Williamson

Above: Drew Barrymore as Casey Becker, whose gut-wrenching murder puts the audience on edge. Matthew Lillard (below) as Stu, falling victim to the ghost-masked killer whose identity remains a mystery.



CRAVEN'S "SCREAM"

horror pulls out all the stops one last time.

took a \$500,000 offer from Miramax, far more than he ever anticipated. "Actually, Oliver Stone offered us more money," said Williamson, "but I went with Miramax, because they had this new label, Dimension Films, dedicated to making genre films, and I felt that the script had a better chance of getting made with them. If Oliver Stone or Paramount bought it, it could easily have gotten lost in the studio development process."

Williamson, who grew up in rural North Carolina, developed an early interest in horror films after seeing three seminal pictures. "I saw *PSYCHO* and *HUSH, HUSH, SWEET CHARLOTTE* on television when I was very young," recalled Williamson. "Then, when I was 10, I went to see *HALLOWEEN* at the theater. Everybody was talking about it, calling it the scariest movie since *PSYCHO*, and I really responded to it. I loved the effect *HALLOWEEN* had on the audience. The way they were screaming for Jamie Lee Curtis; 'Look out behind you!' or 'Don't drop the knife!' I put all that kind of thing into *SCREAM*."

"It was *HALLOWEEN* that started my infatuation with Jamie Lee Curtis. I followed her through *THE FOG* to *TERROR TRAIN* and *PROM NIGHT*. All of those movies found their way into *SCREAM*. I tried to take little bits and pieces of other movies and put them into play in our movie. In the opening sequence, I have Drew Barrymore popping popcorn, just like Annie is doing in *HALLOWEEN*. But I also kept thinking, 'How can I make this different?' I didn't want it to be just another teenage horror movie about a bunch of babysitters, so I started coming up with all these different characters, and the idea that the kids have seen one too many horror films. They've all seen every *HALLOWEEN* and *FRIDAY THE 13TH* movie ever made."

When Miramax purchased Williamson's script, they kept the writer intimately involved with the project, soliciting his opinions on directors and casting. "Miramax really treated me well," enthused the author. "It's so unusual for a writer to be treated



Wes Craven directs actress Neve Campbell as feisty heroine Sydney Prescott—the inheritor of the Jamie Lee Curtis role in a homage to *HALLOWEEN*.

that way, because usually the writer is the first person who is asked to leave. But Miramax would call me and tell me what they were planning at every step of the game. Initially, there were many different directors who were mentioned, Robert Rodriguez, Danny Boyle and George Jung, among them. Finally, I got a call one Saturday morning from Bob Weinstein (the co-chairman of Miramax), and he said, 'I'll give you Wes Craven.' I was really thrilled by that, because I really loved *NIGHTMARE ON ELM STREET*. I had first met Wes the day after I sold the script to Miramax, before he was involved in directing it. I went over to Miramax to meet everybody, and Wes was there, because he was working on a re-make of *THE HAUNTING*. I asked Cary Woods, our producer, to please, please introduce me to Wes. I was very excited, because Wes had already read the script, and he said to me, 'I liked your script. I thought it was scary.'"

Ironically, Craven initially turned the script down when it was first offered to him by Miramax. "I had a certain ambivalence about doing a genre script that was very hard-hitting," explained Craven. "I was interested in branching out, and doing something a little more mainstream, which is why *THE HAUNTING OF HILL HOUSE* was so attractive to me. Then, when Miramax decided not to go ahead with *THE HAUNTING*, I thought, 'This is really crazy. *SCREAM* is a very strong script, just

go back to your roots and do what you do best.' I felt like doing something wild and really scary, and not worrying about my image. There was a voice telling me, 'You've got to do this.' The other thing was the shock of Miramax not going ahead with *THE HAUNTING*. We were all set to do it, and I thought they really wanted to make it. So it was a combination of those two events. Then I told my agent to call Bob Weinstein back and see if we could still make a deal."

A mere two weeks after he sold his script, Williamson was busy on a revision, adding some additional thrills to the storyline. "I had played down the

horror and the gore of it," said Williamson, "because I had written the script to sell. On paper having a girl running from a killer for five pages doesn't work. So I filled it with dialogue, and all the kinds of things that I believe got it sold. During the rewrite, I added another murder, at Bob Weinstein's request. There was a segment in the middle where nobody gets killed for 35 minutes, and Bob said, 'I just don't think we can do that.' So I came up with a way of having the principal killed. Originally, he was just a red herring, but now he gets eliminated early on. Henry Winkler plays the principal, so it was really great having Fonzie in the part. It also propels us to the end of the movie, when there's a big horror movie party going on at Matthew Lillard's house. We thought it would be fun to have all these kids at the house, but then we needed to get rid of them, so we could get back to our core group of characters. By having the principal killed, we accomplished that, because all the kids want to go look at his corpse strung-up on a goal-post down at the high school."

When Wes Craven came back to the project, most of the script revisions had been completed, and the director felt his only real job was to visualize the script. "The principal's murder was added before I came on," noted Craven, "and I didn't make any major changes, except to the ending which was still somewhat in flux. So we fiddled with that a little, but this screenplay, more than



Henry Winkler as Principal Himbry loses his cool with a student, a red herring—or is he the mad killer? In *SCREAM* everyone's a suspect.

any other I've directed by another writer, was ready to go. It was very well constructed, and everyone responded to it extremely well. The lines fit very well into the mouths of all the actors, although we did do little line changes that came out of the first readings, but it was nothing significant. That was always one of the strengths of the screenplay; it was very clever and tightly knit. It was a real pleasure to be able to simply concentrate on directing the script, and not have to worry about fixing it. Kevin was on the set a lot, and he's been one of our greatest fans."

Being a big admirer of Craven's work, Williamson was initially somewhat in awe of the director, but quickly got over that when it came time to tighten the script. "Wes and I sat down and broke the script into pieces," said Williamson. "The story stayed pretty much intact, but we added some scares, and shortened it. Wes reworked some of the action sequences, and we would argue and go back and forth, but there's a point where I had to realize that Wes is more experienced than I am. This is my first produced screenplay, so I took the opportunity to learn and listen. We had a great collaboration, and I learned a lot from seeing Wes, not only working on the set, but later in the editing process, seeing what it takes to bring a movie to life."

With a first rate script finished and ready to shoot, Miramax and Craven began their casting search, and managed to attract a group of talented

young thespians to the film, usually one of the weakest links in genre movies. As Craven pointed out, doing a film with mostly teenagers, you're locked into a certain age bracket. "You're always going to be getting people who are relatively early into their careers," said Craven. "In this case, I was really struck by how supportive Miramax was in going for relatively well-known and highly paid actors. Courteney Cox wasn't cheap, and some of those kids brought considerable fees to the budget. Neve Campbell has been acting a long time, so although she's young, she has a lot of experience and had done a lot of serious work. Skeet Ulrich has already done four pictures, including a leading role in Paul Schrader's *TOUCH*. There were a lot of other actors who would have been much cheaper than Skeet, but nobody could nail the role like he did. When Skeet came in, suddenly six weeks of casting went out the window, because he really understood the part. It was a lot more money, but well worth it. Usually, the studio says, 'Here's your casting budget, get whoever you can.' So, even if you can get somebody who has a lot of potential, like a Johnny Depp, if it's his first movie, he's not going to be nearly as good as he'll be five years later. We were lucky to get kids who were already very experienced."

Author Williamson didn't have any actors in mind when he was writing the script, but he was quite pleased with the final cast that Miramax assembled. "There's not one weak link in the performances," said Williamson. "Across the board they all deliver really strong characterizations. That's great, because it's an ensemble piece, and I was playing with this idea from *PROM NIGHT*, which is that, one by one, all these kids start getting killed off. It becomes a sort of guessing game, where you slowly eliminate suspects as they die. Everyone in the movie is a suspect. The girl's father, her boyfriend, the sheriff, the janitor. We manage to point the finger at everyone."

For the film's central role of Sidney Prescott, the feisty heroine who Williamson modeled after Jamie Lee Curtis in *HALLOWEEN*, Craven selected Neve Camp-

“HALLOWEEN began my infatuation with Jamie Lee Curtis. I followed her from *THE FOG* to *TERROR TRAIN* and *PROM NIGHT*.”

—*Scripter Kevin Williamson*—

bell, star of the TV series, *PARTY OF FIVE*. Sidney is ostensibly the terrified victim of the killer, but could the shock of witnessing her mother being brutally butchered have turned her into a schizophrenic personality?

Skeet Ulrich, who, like scripter Kevin Williamson, grew up in North Carolina, was chosen for the role of Billy Loomis, Sidney's boyfriend and the first person to become a suspect in the mysterious slayings. Could Billy be a dangerous psychopath who unknowingly terrorizes his own girlfriend?

The services of Courteney Cox, from the hit TV show *FRIENDS*, were enlisted to play Gale Weathers, a television news reporter who ruthlessly pursues the story of the small town killings. Gale never seems to be far from the murder scene. Is she just a good reporter, or could she be attempting to create some news of her own?

Drew Barrymore plays Casey Becker, an innocent teenager at home alone when she becomes the first victim in the series of gruesome homicides. But is Casey really dead?

Deputy Dewey Riley is enacted by David Arquette, who played the young Robert Duvall role in *DEAD MAN'S WALK*, the prequel to *LONESOME DOVE*. As a law officer, he would seem to be above suspicion, but could Deputy Riley be investigating his own crimes?

For the role of Stu Maker, a high school pal of Billy and Sidney's, Craven cast Matthew Lillard, whose past films include *HACKERS* and *SERIAL MOM*. Stu seems like a slightly confused but normal teenager. Could that confusion be concealing the symptoms of a paranoid?

Sidney's best friend, Tatum Riley, is played by Rose McGowan, who gained kudos in the bizarre cult hit *THE DOOM GENERATION*. Could Tatum be hiding an insane jealousy of Billy?

Newcomer Jamie Kennedy plays Randy, who works at the local independently owned video store (having been fired from Blockbuster). His favorite

The masked killer of *TERROR TRAIN*, the 1980 slasher film that served in part as the inspiration for Kevin Williamson to script *SCREAM*'s masked murderer.



fare is gory slasher films. Could having seen one too many horror flicks have sent Randy over the edge?

Although Williamson didn't write the script with any actors in mind, he remembers getting early suggestions on casting from people who read his script. "I showed it to my brother," recalled the writer, "and his first thought was, 'You know who could play the lead? That girl on PARTY OF FIVE.' He didn't know her name, but he thought she would be great. Then a friend of mine said to me, 'You know who would be good as Stu? That guy Matthew Lillard who played Drew Barrymore's friend in MAD LOVE.' So two of the actors who were first mentioned to me, ended up in the movie, which I thought was really interesting."

Craven felt his final cast were among the best actors he's ever worked with. "They're all incredibly gifted and are really going all out," said the director. "They were a real source of energy and inspiration. We all got along well together and everyone was very committed to the project. There's always the potential for star tantrums, somebody being a real bitch on wheels, but it just didn't occur."

The 22-year-old leading lady, Neve Campbell found working with Craven a sheer delight. "Wes is one of the best acting directors I've yet to work with," said Campbell. "Doing a television series like PARTY OF FIVE, I work with 24 directors in a season. There are some good ones, and others who are very technically oriented, who don't have a clue on how to direct actors. Surprisingly, Wes is incredible in that area. He really creates images for you, to help you get to where you need to be within the scene. We were doing one scene, and I had done a few takes, and right before we did the last take, Wes said to me, 'Okay, imagine you've got a thousand bullets ringing through your body. Now go do it.' That kind of insight helped me a lot, so I really love working with Wes."

Williamson originally had set the script in his hometown of Bayboro, North Carolina, where he felt the sense of quiet serenity would provide a stark contrast to the gruesome work of a serial killer. "I wanted to get the feeling of THE TOWN THAT DREADED SUNDOWN," said Williamson, "where the community is not equipped to handle all these vicious killings. They eventually have to curfew the town, and everything closes down at dark. Of course, when the killings continue, the curfew just



The opening scene, after Drew Barrymore's murder, Sidney (Neve Campbell) helps boyfriend Bill (Skeet Ulrich) through her window. But is he the killer?

serves to isolate people even more."

Initially, Craven scouted little towns outside the studios at Wilmington, North Carolina, but came up empty-handed. "I wanted to have very American looking houses," said Craven, "and a lot of the houses there were very dark brown, or brick, and that didn't look attractive to me. It was also during the winter, the weather was cold, and I just didn't see the locations I wanted. We then went outside of Vancouver, and, once again, I didn't see houses I felt looked as American as I wanted. Finally we came to northern California, where it had been raining a lot, so everything was a very lush green, and the houses were perfect. All the houses we ended up using were beautiful real homes, and when we saw the Santa Rosa High School, we decided to come shoot up here. Ironically, we never got to use the school, but originally the principal and everyone at the high school were very open about letting us film there. We really fought very hard to get Miramax to let us come to northern California, because I think it added almost a million dollars to the cost of the picture, but it was well worth it."

WES CRAVEN'S REAL-LIFE NIGHTMARE

Bruce Miller, the production designer for SCREAM, recalled why the Santa Rosa

High School would have been a perfect location. "For one thing, it's Gothic, and has a kind of castle-like quality to it," said Miller. "It's gorgeous to look at, and it looks a little scary. We have some frightening moments that occur at the school, and you could believe that somebody could get into that school, terrify the girls, and then get out again without being seen. The school was big enough for that, and was beautifully laid out. We had lots of exterior shots to do in front of the school, and we could have shot a good portion of them against the school facade, when the reporters, police and the kids are all there talking about the first murders. But a crisis developed when the Santa Rosa school board objected to the subject matter of the film, along with Wes's reputation as the master of horror."

"We were all set to shoot at the school," recalled Williamson, "when the school board got the script, and said, 'We're not going to allow you to shoot here.' It created a production problem for us, and got the whole town into an uproar over violence in the movies. It was really a classic First Amendment argument, because they

were judging us on content, so how could they let other films shoot there, but not us? It was simply the judgment of five board members who decreed what was acceptable. I tried to tell them, 'If you read the script, you'll see the point I'm trying to make about violence. Horror movies don't cause violence, it's lack of opportunities and poverty that cause violence.' So by denying us the right to film there, they lost all the money and location fees they would have gotten, thereby creating less opportunity in their community, which, in turn, creates violence. So we said, 'Okay, if you don't want us, we'll go elsewhere,' because we came here to make magic, not to get people upset."

For Craven, the situation turned truly horrendous when the attacks in the local press began to get personal. It would appear that Craven, like Alfred Hitchcock before him, is often pre-judged as some kind of evil being, simply because he happens to make horror films. "It was all very self-righteous and hypocritical," said Craven. "They said things like, 'Wes Craven and his money-grubbing friends from Hollywood have come here to buy our morals and corrupt our children.' There were some things about it that were very scary, because not only was I singled out and attacked personally, but there was such a conspiratorial

feeling of 'You are not going to be allowed to practice your craft here. You're too evil, and we're going to stop you, and it doesn't matter whether it's legal or not, because it's a moral issue.' Once it becomes an issue of morality, then all constitutionality and logic goes out the window, and you feel like, 'two more steps to the right, and people will be knocking on your door in the middle of the night, and goose-stepping.' It was really quite chilling in many ways."

When Craven began searching for a new school location, he found a frosty reception awaiting him in neighboring communities. A suitable site was discovered in nearby Petaluma, but with the specter of the real-life Polly Klass killing still in the air, it was deemed inappropriate. "We tried several other places," related Craven, "but we found the newspaper had stirred things up to such an extent, that anyone who heard about us was already convinced we were the worst people in the world. It was really like a nightmare! Ministers and different organizations would immediately get petitions up against us, and 90% of the attacks we had were by people who hadn't even read the script. We'd get letters to the editor, and people would say 'I haven't read this, but I'm sure it's horrible, and they shouldn't be allowed to film here.' It was all based on a manufactured reality, so whoever has a bone to pick would distort the script and depict it in a certain way. Over and over they were saying it was about disemboweled teenagers, and a foul-mouthed principal. From that you could imagine that every other scene is people being gutted, and having their viscera being thrown at the camera, while the principal was running around using four-letter words. If I heard that, I would say, 'Hey, wait a minute, let me read it,' but people just accepted that that was what the script was about, which was completely not the case."

The situation took a truly bizarre turn when a member of the Santa Rosa school board made a little news of his own. "Right in the middle of the uproar," said Craven, "one of the school board members was arrested for allegedly beating his wife. The paper buried that story, so I called up the editor and said, 'How can you not point out the duplicity of this guy? Don't you want to draw a correlation? He said, 'Oh no, we don't do that kind of thing.' Those people were really showing themselves to be completely deceitful!"

The controversy was finally resolved when the production found a location at the nearby Sonoma Community Center. "It had been an elementary school," said Miller, "but it was now owned by a private non-profit group that rents it out to community organizations. It

“The newspaper had stirred things up to such an extent that anyone who heard about us was convinced we were [bad] people.”

—Director Wes Craven—

wasn't a building that was owned by the city, so it wasn't under the same kind of jurisdictions. There was still some antagonism, because of the publicity that had been generated, but finally cooler heads prevailed. They had really skewered Wes to the stake, and, to tell you the truth, we have the right to make these movies, but right or wrong, who wants to be vilified in the paper every day?"

Craven estimated that the delays over the use of the school cost Miramax over \$350,000. "It was a total lose-lose situation," said the director. "The school board lost a \$70,000 location fee that would have done immense good for their high school, and we had to build extra sets and totally rearrange our schedule. It was really just complete stupidity from one end to the other, all because these people were on their moral high horse."

The opening sequence of SCREAM features a relaxed Drew Barrymore, safe and secure in the comfort of her own home. As she's making some popcorn to enjoy while watching a horror film, she receives an anonymous phone call. She begins playfully flirting with the caller, discussing her favorite fright films with the total stranger, blissfully unaware that her every move is being watched by the mystery caller (who's using a cellular phone).

Williamson dreamed up the opening sequence after seeing a Barbara Walters TV special on the Gainesville murders. "I was house-sitting for a friend," recalled Williamson, "and I had been there for three

days, alone in this big, empty house. During a commercial, I went into another room and noticed that a window was wide open, and I got very scared, because I was sure that the window wasn't open before. So I called up a friend, and while I was on the portable phone, I went into the yard, started looking around, and checked out the garage. The whole time my friend was saying, 'Look out, Hannibal Lecter's going to get you.' He was going on and on with every different killer movie ever made, and I started thinking about what might happen if a killer was actually out there."

To shoot the scene, production designer Bruce Miller recalled the type of house they were looking for. "We wanted houses that were vulnerable," explained Miller. "We didn't want homes that looked like castles, or that you could really protect yourself in. We needed houses that were close to the ground, and that had windows and doors that were very accessible, so if somebody was going to be stalking them, they could get to them very quickly. It would be your average middle-class teenager's home, with nothing too scary about it. When they come home, they think they're safe and then all of a sudden there's a knock at the front door, and then there's a knock at the back door. What teenager thinks that death is just around the corner? They just don't think in those terms, but in reality they are susceptible to being stalked."

The house they finally found for the sequence, was in the beautiful wine country of Glen Ellen. "It was a spectacular home, that the owners had especially designed for them," said Miller. "There are beautiful French doors all around, so even when you were inside, you were outside. There were no curtains on the windows, because you're right in the middle of their vineyard, with beautiful trees all around it, and it was very easy to imagine somebody watching you from outside the house. When Drew walked into the front door, she said, 'This is perfect. I could definitely be a teenager flirting with some guy on the phone, thinking he's nowhere in sight, and here he is watching me from outside.' Essentially, the only thing protecting her were just sheets of glass that would be very easy to break."

And rest assured the glass does get broken, although it has been slightly reworked from the original script. "In the first version of the script," said Williamson, "I had Casey outside the house, having to go past three large windows, to get around to her front yard. When she goes to the first one she sees the killer all the way down at the end of the hall. At the second window she sees him across the room, looking in a closet, and then at the third win-

Renting gore films from the video store, Skeet Ulrich as Bill (left) teases Randy (Jamie Kennedy) and Stu (Matthew Lillard), or is he for real?



SCREAM

HORROR'S NEW BREED

Scripter Kevin Williamson on revitalizing the genre.

By Lawrence French

When Kevin Williamson was a 12-year-old, he got an 8mm camera and made his first scary movie, *WHITE AS A GHOST*. "It was very similar to *SCREAM*," said Williamson, whose unique horror script for *SCREAM* attracted Wes Craven to direct. "It was about a killer stalking my next door neighbor, a 13-year-old girl." Some 18 years later, Williamson is about to begin directing his second horror film, *THE FACULTY*, only this time with a Hollywood studio backing him.

Williamson's initial interest in horror films was piqued after seeing John Carpenter's *HALLOWEEN*, and he was especially taken by the subsequent stalker films featuring Jamie Lee Curtis. "I really loved her in *PROM NIGHT*," exclaimed Williamson. "I put a running story about Jamie Lee into *SCREAM*. You'll definitely know I was in love with her. We even thought about using her in *SCREAM*, for a possible cameo, but we figured that would be crossing the line."

Williamson first began in the business, not as a writer, but as an actor. "I did some soap opera work in New York," explained Williamson, "and then moved out to Los Angeles. I worked as an assistant to a music video director, and then began working my way up to production manager, and finally I got to direct a couple. I always wanted to write, though, so I finally decided I would do it. I read all the screenplay books, read some scripts, and sat down and wrote *KILLING MRS. TINGLE*. It was a comedy about a young high school girl, who is one point shy of becoming a vale-



Williamson at the word processor, enshrined with ghost-mask decor. Inset: His inspiration, Jamie Lee Curtis in *THE FOG*.

dictorian, so she sets out to kill her English teacher. I gave it to a friend who had an agent, and two weeks later I was signed with the agent. We sold it to Interscope and Joe Dante was going to direct it. Joe was a great guy, he would have been the perfect director for it, but he left after we worked for almost a year on re-writing the script."

When *KILLING MRS. TINGLE* failed to get produced, Williamson whipped up *SCREAM* to help pay his bills. After the spec script was bought by Miramax, they turned around and signed Williamson to a three picture deal. "That's why selling *SCREAM* to Miramax was a smart move," noted Williamson. "That wouldn't have happened if I sold it elsewhere. I'll actually be directing *THE FACULTY* for Miramax later this year. It's

like *THE BREAKFAST CLUB* meets *THE THING*. There's stuff like when the head falls off the table in *THE THING*, then sprouts legs and starts walking around. It's set in a high school, so I touch on what's going on in our school system today, the violence and drugs, and what we're teaching our children."

It appears that Williamson's first three projects could almost be a trilogy, each dealing with different aspects of teenage life in contemporary high schools. However, despite his love of the horror genre, Williamson doesn't plan to work in it exclusively, since he is well aware of the pitfalls of becoming typecast in Hollywood. "Wes has been a real mentor to me," said Williamson. "He sat me down and warned me not to do only horror movies. So I'm working on a

comedy and a huge action-thriller, a sort of homage to *THREE DAYS OF THE CONDOR*. Being hooked up with Miramax helps, because they strive to make clever films. They bring class to the genre, so it doesn't have that kind of horror movie baggage, where people think of it as a B-movie."

Williamson has also written a third script, based on the book by Lois Duncan, *I KNOW WHAT YOU DID LAST SUMMER*. It's set to go into production at Mandalay Entertainment. "It's about these four best friends," said Williamson, "who run over someone and kill him. Instead of calling the police, they drag his body 20 yards and dump him in a lake. Then, a year later, they start getting notes saying, 'I know what you did last summer,' and they all begin to

come apart at the seams. It appealed to me because it's similar to William Castle's *I SAW WHAT YOU DID*, which I really liked, but it ended up moving more in the direction of *FRIDAY THE 13TH*, except it's smarter."

If *SCREAM* does well, Williamson has already been signed to write a sequel. "It's not written yet," said Williamson, "but it's all in my head. They just have to give me the go-ahead to write it. It opens during Sidney's first year in college, and a movie based on the murders that take place in *SCREAM*, is just coming out in theaters. I was originally hoping to call it *SCARY SEQUEL*, but we lost that when Miramax changed the title [from *A SCARY MOVIE*] to *SCREAM*." Now, if Williamson can just convince John Carpenter to direct it. □



SCREAM

FRIGHTMASTER WES CRAVEN

The director sees beyond his haunting "slasher" label.

By Lawrence French

"I can look at a corpse chopped to bits without batting an eyelid, but I can't bear the sight of a dead bird."

—Alfred Hitchcock

After a long career specializing in horror films, director Wes Craven has high hopes of finally breaking out of the genre straight-jacket. Ironically, it was because Miramax was so delighted by Craven's shriek-inducing work on *SCREAM*, that they're allowing him the chance to direct a more "mainstream" project. "It's taken a renegade company like Miramax to give me the chance to direct a film that's not in the genre," said Craven. "After our test preview of *SCREAM*, they sat down with me and said, 'Look, we have one other genre film we want you to make, but if you make that, you can make a second film with us, from your choice of all the films we have in development.'

"We're in the process of doing a two-picture deal, where I do a film called *BAD MOON RISING*, which is about werewolves and motorcycles, and a second, non-genre film. What I'm leaning towards is a feature version of the documentary *FIDDLE FEST*, which was just out last year. It's about a New York school teacher who teaches the violin to ghetto kids. It follows all her struggles, ending up with a triumphant concert at Carnegie Hall, where her students are playing with four of the world's top violinists. It's taken 25 years for me to be able to do something totally non-genre. It's just because I knocked Miramax's socks off with this picture, so they were good enough to say, 'Hey, you want to do something else, we'll give you a chance.' I've seen very few directors who do more than one horror film, and then go on and do other kinds of films. Cronenberg has done it, but all his films have been rather bizarre."

Unfortunately, Craven's planned version of Shirley Jackson's classic ghost novel,



Wes Craven, a mild-mannered genre auteur who resents being pigeon-holed in the horror genre, directs actresses Courteney Cox and Neve Campbell.

The Haunting of Hill House, will not be part of his Miramax deal. "We were struggling to get a script that Miramax would approve," said Craven. "They wanted to do something that was classy, and faithful to the original book, but they felt the first version of the script, by Rick [W.D.] Richter, was too much towards horror, and too similar to *NIGHTMARE ON ELM STREET*. We did a second script by Edithe Swensen, but they felt that was too mild, and needed to be scarier. They just seemed to lose interest, and I was surprised, because they had invested a lot of money in the project. You couldn't tell what they wanted, while with *SCREAM* it was a much clearer, straight-ahead story. It was a fresh idea that would appeal to a younger audience, and in many ways it was a safer bet for them. When they decided not to make *THE HAUNTING*, they actually gave us the property for three months, but we couldn't find anybody willing to go forward with it, although I believe it's just been purchased by Dreamworks. They're going to do a whole new script, and I'm no longer involved."

Of course, Craven has no intention of abandoning horror films, but like genre directors George Romero, Tobe Hooper and John Carpenter, he finds the labels bestowed upon him by the press something of a burden. "I have hardly ever seen my name men-

tioned in the *L.A. Times*, without 'Guru of Gore' or 'Sultan of Slasher' attached to it," lamented Craven. "They just can't write about you as a normal filmmaker. It's somehow impossible for them not to take a shot at you. Most of the time when they were referring to me in the Santa Rosa newspapers [during the controversy over the use of the local high school], it was always as 'slasher king, Wes Craven.' It's a terribly confining label, and one I've struggled to get away from my whole career."

Besides feeling restricted by such directorial typecasting, Craven also finds the term "slasher film" objectionable. "I hate that word," admitted

Craven, "because it's clearly derogatory and there's a sort of superior feeling by a lot of people when they use it. At least with 'horror film,' you have more of a sense of movies that have become classics, but I've never heard of anybody within the mainstream referring to a classic slasher film. I'm sure slasher film fans can say, 'FRIDAY THE 13TH was a classic slasher film,' and not feel they're denigrating it, but most adults when they say that, are sort of looking down their noses at you, and I hate that feeling."

Craven, who has a Masters of Philosophy degree from Johns Hopkins University, thinks that horror films have a nearly unlimited potential for exploring the human condition. "I think there's plenty that's done in the genre that's at a low level," said Craven, "but it also has the capacity to accept a heavy load of content. It's like the story of Cain and Abel. It gets down to those very basic and simple elements that say so much about the human beast, both the good and the bad sides. It shows the worse that human beings can do to each other, but it also shows how courageous and strong humans can be in the face of adversity. The genre lends itself to both the horrific and the heroic in a really great way. I'm just glad that I read the Greek myths and was steeped in the *Bible* when I was growing up, because it's



Campbell discovers the body of the cameraman assisting TV newswoman Gale Weathers (Courteney Cox)—another throat-slashed victim. Gale never seems to be far from the murder scene. Hmmm.

all a very similar kind of drama.”

On another front, Craven is developing a CD-ROM entitled, Wes Craven's HOUSE OF FEAR. “It was a concept I came up with,” explained the director, “and we pitched it to a couple of places. This one company, Cyberdreams, took it and ran with it. It's well along in the programming stage. I turned in a very thorough treatment of how it would work. Basically, it's a house of horrors, starting from darkness and going to light. It's based on seven primal fears, (including: fear of drowning, fear of immobility, fear of a bad parent, fear of falling, fear of the predator, fear of the loss of self and fear of chaos). In each area you have to solve a problem or confront a monster, and once you've confronted and triumphed over it, the lights come on in that area, and you get a better glimpse of it. The goal is to go throughout the house, beat all the primal fears, and get all the lights on. It's a positive and fun way for kids to confront their horrors and fears, in a way that can be good for their overall head.”

No doubt some of Craven's own childhood fears shaped his later work in horror films. “I remember growing up in very tough and dangerous neighborhoods,” said the director. “I came from a broken family, with a father who was pretty scary. I was raised in a very fundamentalist family, with all that sort of hellfire and brimstone preaching, and I think those kinds of things certainly affected me. Telling a little kid he's going to burn in hell forever, that's a pretty scary concept. There was a lot of talk of the Devil, and spirits and all that kind of thing.”

Another important influence on Craven was discovering the writings of the ultimate master of terror and the macabre, Edgar Allan Poe. “I discovered Poe in junior high school,” recalled Craven, “and read everything he wrote. He was a fascinating character. I went to school in Baltimore, and Poe's grave is there. Then, when I was research-

ing a film at West Point, I found out he was a cadet there. He wanted desperately to get out of West Point, so he'd show up for drills naked, just wearing a sword. He was involved in all sorts of wild escapades and finally got thrown out. Poe was a very haunted person. I'd love to do a biographical film on him some day.”

With violence in films coming under attack from many quarters lately, Craven is quick to defend his work. “A lot of people ask me how I can do films that are glorifying violence,” noted Craven. “I always turn it around and say, ‘It's not glorifying violence. It's a film about normal people facing violence, and they're horrified by it, but they learn to triumph over it.’ That's what life is about, especially as a kid. Facing your fears. I always try to look at the positive aspect. I don't think Freddy Krueger is just a man with knives on his fingers, but it's talking about an element that either kills innocence or stupidity. In Hindu mythology there's Shiva, which is the goddess of death and destruction, but they're not talking about the specific symbol as a reality. It stands for something else.”

Of course, dreams have always played a large role in Craven's films, and he admits to being greatly influenced by directors like Luis Bunuel, Ingmar Bergman and Roman Polanski, whose work often contains vivid dream sequences. “I've always had very powerful dreams,” said Craven. “As a kid, it was wondering about, ‘What is that world, and how do I deal with it?’ So I certainly found Surrealism and Dada to be very interesting art movements. I especially liked the way directors like Bunuel would go in and out of a dream state. I think as a filmmaker, it was a niche that was very interesting to me, and somewhat unexploited. However, SCREAM is much more real. I haven't done a single dream sequence. In fact, it's probably my first film without a dream sequence!” □

“I came from a broken family, with a father who was pretty scary. I was raised in a very fundamentalist, fire and brimstone, family.”

—Director Wes Craven—

dow she looks in, and sees his face pressed against the glass, staring back at her. We had to re-vamp that, because the house we ended up using didn't match the script.”

“In the film, the killer just reaches right through the window,” said Craven, “so there's an enormous crash, and then he smashes his whole head through the frame. During our preview, that was the first place people just jumped out of their seats. It's a fun scene, very frightening.”

The scene also affords the viewer their first glimpse of the killer, who is garbed in a ghostly white mask. The ghost mask serves to keep the assailant's identity a secret from his victims, as well as the audience. Finding a suitable design for the mask proved to be an irksome production problem. “I wish I could say I designed it,” laughed Miller, “but the truth is, we found it at a house when we were scouting locations. A couple who were grandparents lived there, and the bedrooms were still decorated for their kids. The kids had all

Rose McGowan as Tatum, another teen victim falling prey to the psychopathic knife wielder. For Craven, the horror holds cathartic meaning.



SCREAM

DESIGNING HORROR

Real locations gave the shocks greater impact.

By Lawrence French

To get the appropriate small-town feeling needed for the houses that would be featured in SCREAM, Wes Craven decided to shoot in and around the beautiful wine country of northern California. As production designer, Craven chose Bruce Miller, no stranger to horror films, having worked with George Romero on such films as DAWN OF THE DEAD and CREEPSHOW. "It was just a fluke that a friend of mine was working on SCREAM, and called me to say they were looking for a designer," said Miller. "After meeting with Wes, I ended up with the job."

Miller came to the film, after it had already been determined that shooting would take place outside of the Los Angeles area, without the use of any studio sets. "They had looked all around Los Angeles," noted Miller, "but it was too far flung. To get the number of houses and exteriors that they needed would have meant going to so many different areas, they decided there was no point in doing it in L.A. I also knew there were too many exteriors for us to do it in a studio. The interiors we could have done on stages, but the whole point of the movie is that these kids live in houses that are essentially very vulnerable. So we wanted to be able to shoot both the inside and outside of the houses. It was tough on Wes and the actors, because of all the action and complicated things that needed to happen in some of the houses. If we could have shot those scenes in a studio, it would have made things a lot easier."

In Santa Rosa, Miller almost immediately found the kind of



Enhancing the horror with the naturalism of real locations, Neve Campbell, Jamie Kennedy and Courtney Cox are shocked to discover a new victim.

defenseless houses they were looking for. "We were very lucky," said Miller. "We found really wonderful locations in the first batch of houses we looked at. We kept looking, but we ended up shooting almost everywhere we saw in the first couple of days, excepting the Santa Rosa high school. The houses weren't perfect, they all needed a little work, but I think Wes was so happy he found locations he could shoot in, as opposed to somewhere like North Carolina, where the houses just didn't seem right."

Craven and Miller initially discussed the kind of everyday normal look they wanted. "We wanted very middle-class American homes," said Miller. We didn't want anything too scary about them. What makes it scary is having the kids stalked by a killer. We also talked about what the killer wore, and how he comes and goes as fast as he does. You're not sure if it's supernatural, because the murderer appears very quickly from one place to the next. When we looked at

houses, we wanted floorplans that would allow the killer to get to the kids inside very quickly."

The opening scenes of the movie were shot in a privately owned home, and involve the depiction of a brutal double homicide. In contrast to the Santa Rosa school board, the homeowners welcomed the filmmakers into their abode. "It was a kind of a once-in-a-lifetime thing for them," claimed Miller. "They might have had some doubts about it, but they were mostly concerned about getting their property back the way they left it. Their kids loved us. One daughter was around all the time, and I think we may have paid for her college education for a couple of years."

In Santa Rosa, Miller found a house that served as the home of Tatum (Rose MacGowan). "It was right across the street from the house used by Alfred Hitchcock in SHADOW OF A DOUBT," noted Miller. "It was a wonderful fluke, because SHADOW OF A DOUBT is one of my favorite movies. On the

same street is the house they used for POLLYANNA, and that's a really spectacular house. We originally looked at the SHADOW OF A DOUBT house as a possibility, but it didn't have enough room. The bedrooms weren't big enough, and the upstairs hallway was too small, although Hitchcock somehow shot there. The house across the street worked much better, because we needed a front porch, where the two girls are talking and are supposedly being watched by the killer. We did use the kitchen in the SHADOW OF A DOUBT house, and the owners showed us the original dresser upstairs in the bedroom, where Teresa Wright finds the ring that incriminates Joseph Cotten as the murderer."

The production used the tiny municipality of Healdsburg to create the film's fictional town of Woodsboro. "It had a very pretty town square," revealed Miller. "It really looked more like New England than California. There's a City Hall on the corner of the square that we turned into our police station. We just changed some signs and put a few things in the windows. We couldn't use a real police station, because we would have been at their mercy, and we couldn't be disrupting their police activity."

Miller found working on SCREAM to be a delightful experience, a fact he attributed mostly to his director. "Wes set the tone, and it was a wonderful group of people. Wes is a really nice guy, just like George Romero. They both have this reputation because they make horror films, but they wouldn't be able to hurt someone if they had too! They're really just teddy bears." □

moved out and gotten married, but still came back with their grandchildren, who'd play with all the same toys that their parents had used. When we were looking at the house, our producer, Marianne Madalena saw this mask on the bedpost. She came out of the bedroom and said, 'Look at this mask,' and Wes said, 'That's it! That's what it should look like.'"

The mask was turned over to the designers at KNB EFX Group, to guide them in their design approach. "At first we wanted to make it on our own, so it would be copyright free," said Craven. "So we had KNB do a whole series of mask drawings, but they just didn't work. We couldn't design a mask that had the same scary qualities of the one we found. It was uncanny, but some unknown artist sculpted this mask that just caught something. Luckily, we found the manufacturer's name printed inside the mask. We managed to get the rights to use it, literally the day after we started shooting. It was some little Mom and Pop operation in Maine. It could be a real boon to them after the film comes out. I hope it becomes a big Halloween item. We actually went back and re-did a couple shots, because the first two days we used our made-up mask and it really looked stupid. We had to go back and shoot the close-ups with the better mask, after we got the rights cleared."

Another problem that Craven faced was how the killer would be depicted on screen. "In the original script, it just called for a killer in a ghost mask," noted Craven. "As soon as I came on-board, I pointed out that we couldn't just show a killer in a mask on screen, without the audience being able to tell who it is, either by their clothes, or by how they move, or if it's a boy or a girl. We were trying to cast suspicion between kids and adults, so we had to conceive a costume for the killer that virtually covers every square inch of their body. That became a big deal; what the killer was wearing, how do you construct it, is it white, purple, black, is it a clown suit? We went through quite a bit with that, to make sure it worked on screen."

For the first time in his career, Craven decided to use the wide-screen Panavision format. "We have a very big, beautiful look," said Craven. "It was very interesting to work with the anamorphic process, although it was very challenging technically. Focus was much more critical. It gave me a lot more freedom in horizontal framing, but the depth of field was very tricky, because we were typically working with a four-inch focal plane throughout the film. You often had to choose who was in focus, even if two people were standing side by side. We

“We had a drip area for the actors so they wouldn't get blood all over the set dressing. It looked like a cow had been slaughtered.”

—Director Wes Craven—

went through a lot of agony with that, and there was a lot of camera flaring we had to be aware of, even coming from things outside of the frame—car chrome and things like that. We had to spray all those kinds of reflective surfaces down. When we started, these were problems I knew nothing about, but we learned fast and the end result is a wonderful-looking picture. I had been wanting to use widescreen for a while, and after I finished shooting *NEW NIGHTMARE*, my director of photography, Mark Irwin said, 'The next picture, we've got to make in anamorphic. It's really great.' Unfortunately, Mark had to leave after he started shooting *SCREAM* for some personal reasons, although he shot the bulk of the film. Peter Deming came in to replace him, and shot the last three weeks of the movie."

Deming, whose cinematography will be seen in the upcoming David Lynch film, *LOST HIGHWAY*, attempted to match the footage that had already been completed by Mark Irwin, as closely as possible. "I didn't have a lot of time to prepare," said Deming "so we just had to discuss the shots as we went along. I think we got a pretty similar look. I came in for the whole finale of the movie. We had fun lighting the killer in his ghost mask. We tried to light it from the side and the bottom as much as possible, to give it some mottling. We didn't even want you to see the eyes, because it might suggest who the killer was."

Craven found working on real locations to be a liberating experience, after being

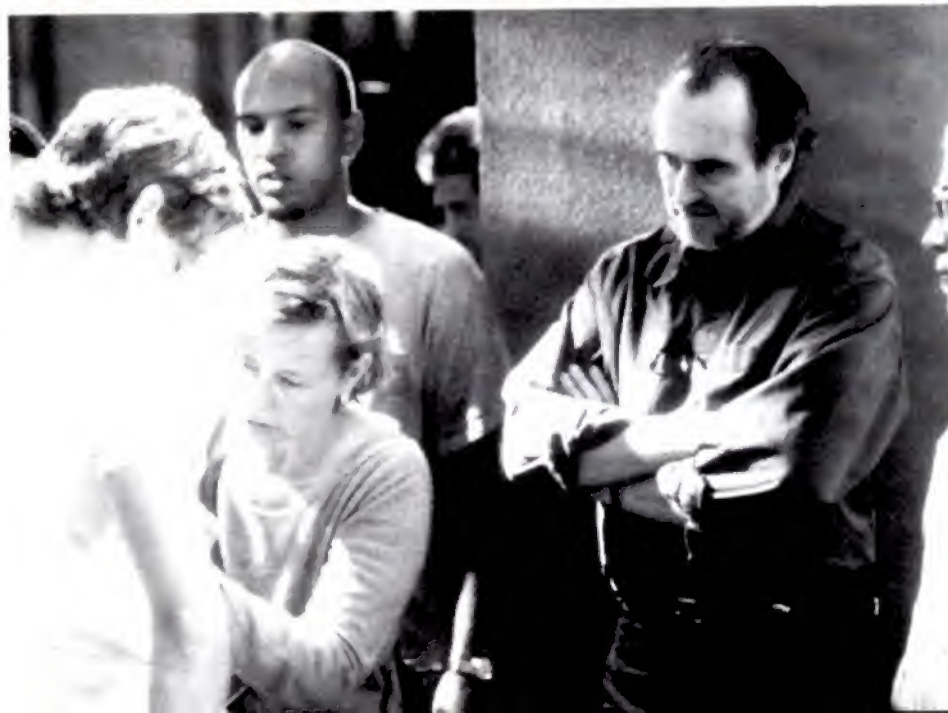
cooped-up on sound stages for his last picture, *VAMPIRE IN BROOKLYN*. "Every time I do a film with stage work, I'm dying to get back onto practical locations," said the director. "We were shooting in the beautiful wine country around Santa Rosa, using some very interesting houses we found there, so I wanted to be able to see out of windows a lot, and get a sense of inside, outside, as opposed to doing interiors on a stage. There was a lot of tricky balancing of light levels from interior to exteriors, that we had to contend with. It's a shame so much of the film takes place at night, because it's so beautiful where we were shooting. I also wanted a very fluid camera, so we did a lot of crane shots, a lot of Steadicam work, and a lot of dolly shots. We also went for angles that were reflective of classic horror films, like *HALLOWEEN*. Dutched angles, creeping up behind people, and angles looking down at people from above. It called for unusual camera mounts, so we would be able to tilt and pan at the same time. We really went all out for the visual look of the film."

Although Williamson was a big fan of John Carpenter's *HALLOWEEN*, Craven was not as enthused by it. "It was good," admitted Craven, "but I'm not a huge fan of it. I was always aware of *HALLOWEEN* being out there, being one of my competitors, and having a very strong following. It was a very straight-forward film, that didn't make any apologies for being exactly what it was, and nothing more. Sometimes that kind of film can be very powerful. I think *FRIDAY THE 13th* was like that. It didn't have any pretensions to deeper layers or anything. It was just about scaring you and grossing you out."

Since scripter Williamson wanted to keep the audience involved in a guessing game about who the killer might be, it was very important that the film be rigorously constructed, and not have the kind of flagrant impracticalities that would make the proceedings impossible. "There has to be an interior logic to anything," noted Craven, "and on *SCREAM* we had to very

carefully go through the whole script, and make sure there was no place where we were cheating. Kevin had really done his homework though, so there's never anyplace where it's impossible for the killer to be doing a murder, because the murderer was seen somewhere else at the same time. By the end of the movie, you can go back a second time and everything is accounted for. It all makes perfect sense. We did get a couple of comments on the preview cards, questioning a few things, but they either didn't realize something, or missed a

Wes Craven prepares actor Skeet Ulrich with blood-spurting effects tubes to film the action of the shocker's numbing, blood-drenched denouement.





Courteney Cox of the hit TV series *FRIENDS* plays ruthless television reporter Gale Weathers, poking her nose into the sensational teen murders.

point where it had already been explained. Even when dealing with the dreams in *A NIGHTMARE ON ELM STREET*, I was very scrupulous about the logic. Freddy could only appear if she was sleeping, and he couldn't harm her in waking life. So you sort of construct a reality, and you have to stay consistent within it."

Craven did a great deal of work with his actors, in order to place suspicion among several different characters who may, or may not be the assailant. "That was fun," said Craven, "because we wanted to have something beneath the surface, to suggest who the killer was, and what he or she was really up to, without giving it away. It had to be extremely subtle, but if you see the picture a second time, you'll say, 'Now I see this person is the killer.' The actors did a lot of subtle stuff, where you realize they're thinking something totally opposite of what they're projecting."

While the main aim of *SCREAM* is to provide chills for the audience, it also has a perverse streak of humor, as evidenced by characters who compare their predicaments to various horror films they've seen. As Randy exclaims at one point, "to successfully survive in a horror movie, you have to abide by the rules: you can never have sex. The minute you do you're as good as gone. Sex equals death. Never drink or do drugs. It's an extension of the first. And never ever, say, 'I'll be right back'."

By playfully exploring these

genre traditions, Williamson is able to subvert them and surprise us, while at the same time keeping several of them intact. Bruce Miller noted, "That for some reason, in all these movies, the kids' parents have disappeared." In *SCREAM*, it is Matthew Lillard's parents who have left him home alone for the weekend, allowing him to host a horror film party for all his friends. Unfortunately, an uninvited guest makes the evening's festivities far more terrifying than anyone anticipated. "Stu throws a great party," said Lillard, "but it was stupid of his parents to go away, because as soon as they do, all hell breaks loose."

Neve Campbell's character Sidney, also gets to break a convention. "Sidney has a hard time trusting anybody," noted Campbell, "and she initially doesn't want to give in to having sex with anyone. It's because of the murder of her mother that happened a year before. However, she eventually does have sex, but doesn't die, which is kind of empowering for women. You can still have sex and be strong."

Craven found a suitable house for the film's party finale, in the isolated countryside of Tomales, California just a few miles from the Bodega Bay site that Alfred Hitchcock used so memorably in *THE BIRDS*. "We wanted Stu's home to have elements of a dark and haunted Gothic house," said Craven, "and it needed to be very isolated. We looked a long time for some place that had all those elements. The house we found was actually brand new. It had not quite been completed when both of the owners died, and the family of younger kids didn't quite know what to do with it. When we found it and offered to use it, they were very happy to let us. The art department went in there and did an enormous number on the house. We put in all sorts of beams, and stained-glass windows, darkened all the colors, and brought in all the set dressings. It was done in a sort of farmhouse style, and we changed it into a Gothic farmhouse. We shot everything right in the house, and even used the attic. The attic wasn't very creepy, so we darkened it

“We wanted to have something beneath the surface to suggest who the killer was, without giving it away. It had to be extremely subtle.”

—Director Wes Craven—

down, and filled it up with all sorts of strange stuff."

Bruce Miller was pleased with the house, because it was large enough to allow for the staging of the many complicated events that occur in the film's climax. "It just doesn't make sense," explained Miller, "that in a normal American home, murders could be happening in the upstairs bedrooms, and people watching television downstairs wouldn't know about it. So the house had to be big enough, and the rooms had to be separated by enough distance, to convince the audience that these things could really be happening, without other people knowing about it. This particular house was perfect for that, because it was very convoluted, and kind of Victorian on the inside. It was actually a little scary to some extent, and then we added big paintings and a chandelier. Because the house was so Victorian on the inside, we didn't want to fight that, but we didn't want to over-stress it either. We even put a volleyball net in the front yard, because it had to be believable that a normal teenager lives there with his parents, who just happened to be away for the weekend."

The house presented other challenges to the filmmakers, such as adapting the action in the script to the actual location. "You have to solve certain problems that relate to the geography of the house," stated Craven. "In the script, Sidney is pursued to a third story attic above all the other rooms, and she had to climb down over the roof, and

land on a balcony outside the bedroom. The killer comes out of the bedroom and she's trying to get off the balcony, while the killer grabs her hand, trying to pull her back up on the balcony. But we never found a house that was designed like that. This one had a sort of a loft room, that was really on the second floor, along with the other finished rooms, so we couldn't have Sidney climb out over the roof. Instead, we had her falling out of the window, to the driveway below, and we realized she would be falling right down by the garage, where someone else has

Jamie Lee Curtis grapples with the Shape, the masked killer of John Carpenter's *HALLOWEEN* (1978), the template for Craven's horror update.



just been killed. We decided it would be great for her to see that, just to add to her own sense of terror."

Indeed, the movie reaches the peak of its nerve wracking suspense, when the murderer strikes a helpless victim, who is stuck in an archetypal position of vulnerability inside the garage. "That scene certainly works," noted Craven. "Our preview audiences really felt a sense of shock, like they couldn't believe that person dies. They'd come to like the character so much, and after the killing a sort of strange hush fell over the audience for a moment. It was almost like they couldn't believe that it was really happening. Staging-wise, it's a very interesting scene. There's a lot of suspense, a jump, then a protracted struggle, and finally the death, so it's a sort of set piece. It's an editorial and camera-angle *tour de force*, as opposed to some other things, which are just a matter of action playing out in longer takes. We use a lot of cutting, and it's a very cinematic scene. The sequence with Drew Barrymore is also very chilling. There were about eight or nine places where the audience was screaming in fear. We had a lot of comments like, 'I haven't been so scared in a long time.' It seems like it really works."

Williamson was especially pleased with the garage sequence, and feels it contains the scariest moments in the movie. "Wes did a beautiful job in creating suspense," enthused Williamson. "My goal was always to make it suspenseful, not just gory, and there's very little blood in that whole garage sequence. The only really bloody moments in the film come at the beginning, which is where it should be. You shock the audience up front, and it stays with them, and then they won't know what to expect for the rest of the movie. That way the killer becomes a real threat, because you know what he's capable of doing. So the opening is a little nasty, but it never gets that bloody again. It becomes more of a mystery, as you wonder where is the killer, and who is going to die next."

Of course, in his past movies, Craven has never been afraid to show a great deal of blood, and he equivocated on Williamson's ascertainment that the film's blood and gore content is restrained. "It is and it isn't," said Craven. "The two deaths at the beginning are quite bloody. That's one of the things that the Santa Rosa school board seized on and found to be so shocking. Obviously, since they're eviscerations, there's



The first victim—Drew Barrymore taunted by the killer with a phone quiz about slasher movies, with her boyfriend's life at stake if she answers wrong.

a lot of blood involved. Nowadays, directors like myself are held up to Hitchcock, and people say, 'In the shower scene from *PSYCHO*, Hitchcock didn't really show anything.' I must have had a million people say that to me, like Hitchcock was this elevated artist, and we're all a bunch of slobs, just because we show real blood."

A concomitant issue that has long been the subject of spirited debate, is the question of how far one should go in the depiction of screen violence. Can it incite viewers to commit copycat crimes? It's a topic that Alfred Hitchcock addressed with some levity, after a man who killed three of his wives was apprehended, and said he murdered the third after seeing *PSYCHO*. Reporters were clamoring for a comment from the famed director, who replied to Orianna Fallaci, "I was very flattered. Oh, I don't know what I wouldn't give to know about all the times I've been copied. The trouble is that every day someone commits the perfect crime; one that isn't discovered. I told [the journalists] I was unhappy, because the man didn't say after which of my films he murdered his second wife. Maybe he murdered the first after drinking a glass of milk. From the glass of milk to the revolver. How often that's happened."

In his screenplay, Williamson also addresses the issue of copycat killings with a

wry sense of humor. "My favorite line in the movie," said Williamson, "is when Sidney says to the killer, 'You sick fuck, you've seen too many horror movies.' And the killer says, 'Don't blame the movies, Sidney. Movies don't create psychos. Movies just make psychos more creative.' That sums it up in a nutshell. I mean, some guy saw *INTERVIEW WITH A VAMPIRE*, and drained all the blood out of his girlfriend's body. Something tells me that he would have killed her anyway. He just happened to see the movie on the wrong night and it made him a little bit more creative, but that girl was already doomed. To blame the movies for that is just absurd."

Craven is in complete agreement with his screenwriter. "I could conceive that there could be a copycat killing," said Craven, "where a killer who is already completely nuts, might use a movie as his format or pattern for a murder, but I think that person is going to kill anyway. I think art is more important than worrying about that. If you're going to look at any single instance of something causing a death, then you'd have to eliminate 80% of the things in

our society. People have been killed with pencils. We're killed all the time by cars and airplanes, but we don't stop using them, because they're important, and it's a very small percentage of deaths. The number of people getting killed by a copycat act is infinitesimally small, yet it's been blown out of all proportion by the media. I think the reason why, is that some people are interested in stopping the message, which is that there is madness in our society, there is violence that's out of control and unexamined. That's why certain people hate these horror films. They want us to sweep it under the carpet, and act like everything is Disneyland, and it isn't. It's just like they want to control rock lyrics, or rap music. They want to act like there aren't those passions and rages out there. Well, I'm sorry, but they are there. Part of the reason they're there, is because a lot of people are leading lives that cause a lot of other people pain and rage. The Bob Doles of the world like their nice lily-white world, but they live isolated away in country club enclaves."

Of course, psychologists and other experts have long argued about the cathartic effect of horror films, and have pointed out their therapeutic value in relieving the pent-up aggressions of the viewer. "Horror films are really primal theater," said Craven. "You're dealing with imaginary

characters that are representing other elements. When you look at a movie that way, you can get around the very parochial idea, where people say, 'Oh my God, you're depicting teenagers getting slaughtered, and you're a horrible person.' No you're not. You're talking about modes of being, whether some people can cope with threats, or some are oblivious to it. I've always felt that horror films start out with many characters to represent a kind of composite character. Most of them don't have the kind of coping skills that you want to have in your central character at the end. So you sort of pare away, almost like you're carving a character out of a block of wood. The parts that are chipped away are the other characters who don't have what it takes to survive. In a sense you're saying, if you're screwing and not looking at what you're doing, then you're going to get killed. The kids in the audience watching the film always identify with the one person they really don't want to be killed. The other characters can get their heads chopped off, because they're symbols of something that the kids don't respect. In a sense they need to be killed. It's like a psychic entity really, that's why I don't think you should take these movies as something that is literally real, in that limited of a way. We're not talking about a real person, but what that type of character represents. It's an imaginary event, a 'what if this were to happen to me,' kind of situation."

At the astonishing conclusion of *SCREAM*, Williamson found that Craven and the actors had envisioned the scenes exactly as he imagined them. "Wes really nailed it, and found the right tone," said Williamson. "Everyone who first read the script, didn't quite know how to classify it. They'd say, 'What's the tone? Is it a comedy, or is it a scary movie.' I'd say, 'It's a scary movie,' but at first we weren't sure how far to take it. Well, Wes got it. It's a dark perverse tone, with a touch of David Lynch, and the actors really manage to capture that feeling. It's really quite disturbing. Something happens at one point, that just transforms the movie, so it really becomes about something more. You just get sucked into that house with the kids, and end up in total shock."

Craven found working with his cast on the final sequence a real challenge, both for the emotions involved in the scenes, and the technical prowess that it required. "The actors couldn't wait to get into that last scene," exclaimed Craven. "I thought they would be resistant to doing it, but it turned out I could hardly hold them back. I think it was because it was such a challenge

“Characters can get their heads chopped off because they’re symbols of something kids don’t respect. In a sense, they need to be killed.”

—Director Wes Craven—

for them, and such a wild release of emotions. It's something that is so forbidden, you just can't believe you're seeing it. Audiences aren't used to seeing this, and it's just appalling. We started by doing little pieces, while we were waiting for the sun to go down, and finally, the actors begged me to let them go do it for the whole day. For the next four or five days we were in the kitchen of that house, and it seemed like we were never going to get out. When we actually got into it, it was horrendous dealing with the continuity. Anytime you're dealing with blood, it's like a nightmare, because if somebody gets stabbed, there's blood, and if you want to do a second take, it's off to the hairdresser and wardrobe, to have the actors changed back to the way they were before. It was very tricky that way. We were going through costumes like crazy. We even had special drip areas where the actors could stand, so they wouldn't drip blood all over the set dressings. It looked like a cow had been slaughtered, and by the time we were done with the ending scene, everybody had blood all over them. The actors couldn't wait to burn their costumes, because they were just covered in blood. They were all clammy, and their clothes were sticking to them, so they'd say to me, 'Can we burn these?' Finally, at the end of it all I said, 'Okay, go burn your wardrobe.'"

When Craven had assembled a rough cut of the film, he screened it for Miramax boss, Bob Weinstein who responded very favorably to the picture. Subsequently,

Wes Craven relaxes on the set with Henry Winkler, despite the controversy that the film's lensing in San Francisco caused with up-in-arms locals.



Craven held an audience preview of the film in Secaucus, New Jersey. "It blew everybody away," exclaimed Craven. "People were laughing one minute and jumping out of their seats the next. The scores we got were in the '80s and '90s, for everything—characters, plot, and pacing, so we really had an extraordinary screening. Miramax said, 'No changes, just go finish it.' We just have a few inserts to shoot, and then it's going to the sound guys. It's a picture that was already there on the page, and we got a great cast together, so it translated very well to the screen."

Scoring of the picture was among the final touches that remained, and Craven discovered a new composer via the Internet. "My assistant, Julie Plec was on this Hollywood Cafe site," revealed Craven, "and was talking to other Hollywood people about our needing a composer. Somebody mentioned the name of Marco Beltrami, and when I heard the CD he had put together I was really struck by his music, so I've been working with him. He's never done a film before, only television, but we're using a full orchestra with a lot of strings, and I have a feeling he's going to deliver something unique and terrific."

Williamson's original title for the film, *SCARY MOVIE* was given the axe by Miramax during production, who no doubt felt *SCREAM* was a more commercial sounding title. While preferring the first title, both Craven and Williamson remained quiescent about the change. "We were incredibly fond of *SCARY MOVIE* as a title," noted Craven. "At first we were upset to hear Miramax was going to change it, but we've come around to thinking that *SCREAM* is a pretty good title. Miramax claimed that there were strictly legal reasons for the change, because there was another film called *SCARY MOVIE*, and they couldn't get the rights to it. Yet, we discovered there was another film called *SCREAM*. At our preview people did a lot of screaming though, so I think they respond to titles that match how they experience the film. They wrote comments like, 'This movie is a scream.' I think with the right trailer and ad campaign we'll be fine."

Williamson agreed, saying, "Miramax needed the title for their marketing purposes. I certainly liked *SCARY MOVIE* better, that's why I named it that, but I understand why they changed it. It's a situation where I have to trust them, because they certainly know more about marketing than I do. I can't have everything. I mean, they're making my first movie and it's turning out to be a dream experience for me! What more could I want?" □

SCREAM

HORROR ON THE SET

A young cast on working with the horror master.

By Lawrence French

On an isolated country road, the cast and crew of Wes Craven's new fright film, *SCREAM* assembled shortly before dusk, to create the scenes of pandemonium that will occur in the movie's appalling finale. After doing some preliminary consultations with crew members, director Craven stepped outside the isolated house he found in Tomales, California. Craven gazed at a beautiful summer sunset, gaining inspiration before starting on a night full of filming that lasted until dawn the next day.

The house was set on a hill, well away from the county road below it. Like the house in *PSYCHO*, there is an air of Victorian and Gothic decor about it, and one imagines it's the kind of house that would have garnered the approval of Hitchcock. Since the building is located right outside of Bodega Bay, (the location of Hitchcock's *THE BIRDS*), it seems rather ominous when hundreds of assembled blackbirds begin chirping as the sun fades away.

As darkness fell, Craven reentered the house to put his actors through their paces. Today's scenes involved mostly fragmented bits of action, and Craven worked quickly, doing run-throughs and shooting the scenes in one or two takes. During a break I asked executive producer, Marianne Maddalena, about Craven's swiftness in shooting the scenes. "Wes had been directing for so long he knows when he's gotten what he needs," said Maddalena. "There's no insecurity. A lot of directors don't know until they get to the set what they're going to do, but Wes sees everything



On location in Tomales, California, site of the shocker's appalling finale and a creative jam session for a young cast in the hands of a master.

early and he can really nail it."

During a short break, actors Matthew Lillard and Neve Campbell join me for an impromptu interview session on the impressive stairway of the house. Lillard and Campbell both found working with Wes Craven to be a joyful experience. "He's a complete cult icon," enthused Lillard. "It's like working with John Waters. My first film was *SERIAL MOM*, where I played Kathleen Turner's son. Working with Wes you've already got a built-in following of people, who will want to see the film. This script was really great, and it's different. The ending is really sick and twisted."

While Neve Campbell enjoyed working with Craven, she made a surprising confession: "I hate watching horror movies," said the actress. "I'm one of those people who are so terrified by them, I have to sit with a pillow in front of my face. I can't watch them, but I love playing in them. *THE CRAFT* was similar to *SCREAM*, be-

cause it was about four women who, as they emerge from childhood, take power and control over their lives."

A few days later, filming moved to the Sonoma Community Center, the replacement site for the film's high school setting, after the filmmakers were made most unwelcome at the Santa Rosa high school. Shooting commenced on a scene involving Sidney (Campbell) arriving for school in Deputy Riley's car. As she emerged, Sidney is accosted by a TV news reporter, who asks her, "How does it feel to be almost brutally butchered?" The actress playing the reporter looked vaguely familiar, and someone finally revealed that it's Linda Blair. After doing a few takes, a cheerful Blair came over to chat. "I'm making a guest cameo appearance with no billing," said the star of *THE EXORCIST*. "I'm just here for one day, so you'll have to find me in the movie. I go way back with Wes, having done *STRANGER IN THE HOUSE* for him. He asked me

if I would do a cameo in *SCREAM* and I said, 'Sure.' I'm wearing these crosses as earrings, for all those horror people who love that kind of stuff."

Returning to the scene, Craven put Blair through the action once again. Deputy Riley, played by David Arquette, attempted to shield Sidney from Blair's obnoxious questions. He tells Blair to "leave the kid alone. She just wants to go to school." On the second take Arquette has flubbed his line, and on subsequent shots he seems to be doing improvised variations of the line. Craven watched calmly, going to takes five and six, before taking Arquette gently aside and conferring with him privately. Later I asked Craven if he was annoyed by the delay.

"David is so lovable, I couldn't get mad at him," said the director. "We just had to do it over. There have been a couple of times where I had to say, 'Let's get professional here,' but David, more than anyone else, marches to a different drummer, and that comes across in his performance. You get something very special and unique. Part of it is because he doesn't memorize his lines completely. He told me, 'I start losing something if I know all the lines.' So he reads the script and understands it, and during the course of four or five takes, it ends up being something quite delightful. I just don't fight it. As the director, I could threaten him, and say, 'You must know the lines exactly as they're written,' but you can get into a whole power struggle that way. I don't feel compelled to do that, because he's giving us something delightful." □

WHOLE WIDE

The rediscovery of Robert E. Howard, father

By James Van Hise

With *HERCULES* and *XENA* a ratings hit on television and Edgar Rice Burroughs' *TARZAN* making a TV comeback, it seems timely for audiences to rediscover Robert E. Howard's *CONAN THE BARBARIAN*. Former Mr. Universe Ralph Moeller has been cast to play Howard's "sword and sorcery" hero in a series produced by American First Run to air in the fall of 1997. Also stirring interest in Howard is *THE WHOLE WIDE WORLD*, a biographical glimpse of the short-lived but supremely talented writer which was set for release December 25 from Sony Classics.

THE WHOLE WIDE WORLD is based on the memoir, *One Who Walked Alone*, by Novalyne Price Ellis, a woman who was a close friend of Howard's during the last three years of his life. The genesis of the film is an odd one, beginning in a roundabout way before Ellis even wrote her memoir and had it published in 1986. Noted Michael Scott Myers, who wrote the screenplay based on the book, "It began back in the late '70s because I was a student of Novalyne Price when I was in high school, and so was Ben [Mouton], the guy who played Clyde Smith [in the film]. She was my speech teacher in Louisiana, and her last year was actually the year I graduated, which was 1979. I asked, 'What are you going to do now?' and she said, 'Well, I'm working on a book. It's about a guy I knew when I was younger; he's the guy that wrote the Conan stories.' That's how she referred to it."

Myers kept in touch with his old high school teacher, and after completing college he visit-



Novalyne Price Ellis on the set with director Dan Ireland, Vincent D'Onofrio, who plays Robert E. Howard and Renee Zellweger, who plays Ellis.

ed her, whereupon she gifted him with a copy of her book, *One Who Walked Alone: (Robert E. Howard, The Final Years)*. At the time he tried reading it, but didn't finish it.

"I put it down and about two years later I picked it back up again because I'd seen a film which was a small period piece and I thought, let me try this again, and I sat down and read it all the way through. I guess my mind was just in another place [this time] and I got through it and was just amazed with Howard. I thought, this is a character that an actor would kill to play because there were so many different sides to him."

Myers contacted Ellis, who kindly allowed him to option the film rights for \$20. "I started working on the script the summer of '90," said Myers. "It was originally 165 pages. It looked like the *Bible*, and I got together with Dan Ireland soon after that and we started paring it down."

Director Dan Ireland came to the project due to his acquaintance with actor Benjamin Mouton, a friend of Myers. Ireland had previously worked as a pro-

ducer on such films as John Huston's *THE DEAD*, Bernard Rose's *PAPERHOUSE* and Ken Russell's *THE RAINBOW* and *LAIR OF THE WHITE WORM*.

Said Ireland, "I had done a picture that I produced for Ken Russell, and one of the actors in my film was Ben Mouton. We stayed friends and he came over to my house one day and said, 'I have a book here I want you to read. This is written by my old school teacher. It's about her friendship with Robert E. Howard.' I didn't know Howard's work at that time, aside from knowing of Conan.

My brother was a complete Howard fanatic, but I wasn't. But after I read the book, I was compelled by it. It was quite amazing. If you read between the lines, this woman was in love with this man, but she could never bring herself to say that she was."

Ireland made contact with Myers and then went to Louisiana to visit Mrs. Ellis. "We talked, and the more she told me she didn't love [Howard], the more I kept asking," said Myers. "It was so clear how much this man meant to her. I thought the story was fascinating. In the middle of Texas, here's this giant of a man with worlds in his head that you just don't understand where they came from. And this woman who really had guts to sort of barge her way into his life when really it wasn't the time where women did things like that. Their friendship was so interesting, and what they talked about was so amazing; I was so touched by it. And when I went to Cross Plains I started getting into the Howard story. That was completely fascinating."

Ireland noted that in the general store in Cross Plains, Texas, they still have Howard's

Howard and Ellis share an epiphany, shortly before the author's tragic suicide. Sony Classics opens the critically lauded screen biography December 25.



WORLD

of sword & sorcery fiction.

death certificate, and under occupation it states: "riter."

"This brilliant man, who was living right in their midst, was looked upon as the town freak," said Myers. "It was mind-boggling! And then I started reading Howard's works. I read *The Last Celt* [the biography by Glenn Lord], and I was hooked."

Both Ireland and Myers were of one mind about who should play Howard: Vincent D'Onofrio. "All of us had seen FULL METAL JACKET and thought he was one of the greatest young actors in America," said Ireland. It took them a year to get the script past D'Onofrio's manager so that he could read it. "She got it to him and I met him a week later, and he was committed. And he stayed with us all the way through." D'Onofrio played Orson Welles in ED WOOD and will appear as a villain in the forthcoming genre film MEN IN BLACK.

Dan Ireland was working for Cineville as vice-president of production, under company chief Carl Colpaert. Myers and his other producing partner wanted at least a \$2.5 million budget to make the film. But when Kushner-Locke expressed interest in the project they only agreed to put up \$1.35 million, take it or leave it.

Myers recalled, "We said, we're not sure that's going to be enough. It's a period piece. It's Texas. But they finally convinced us that we could do it."

The company's publicity claims the film cost \$4 million to make, a claim the director quickly dismissed. "If people know that the film was shot for \$1.35 million when they look at it, they'll know that people had to love this and put their heart and soul into it to make it look like this," he said. "I'm very proud of it." Kushner-Locke ultimately spend about \$1.6 mil-

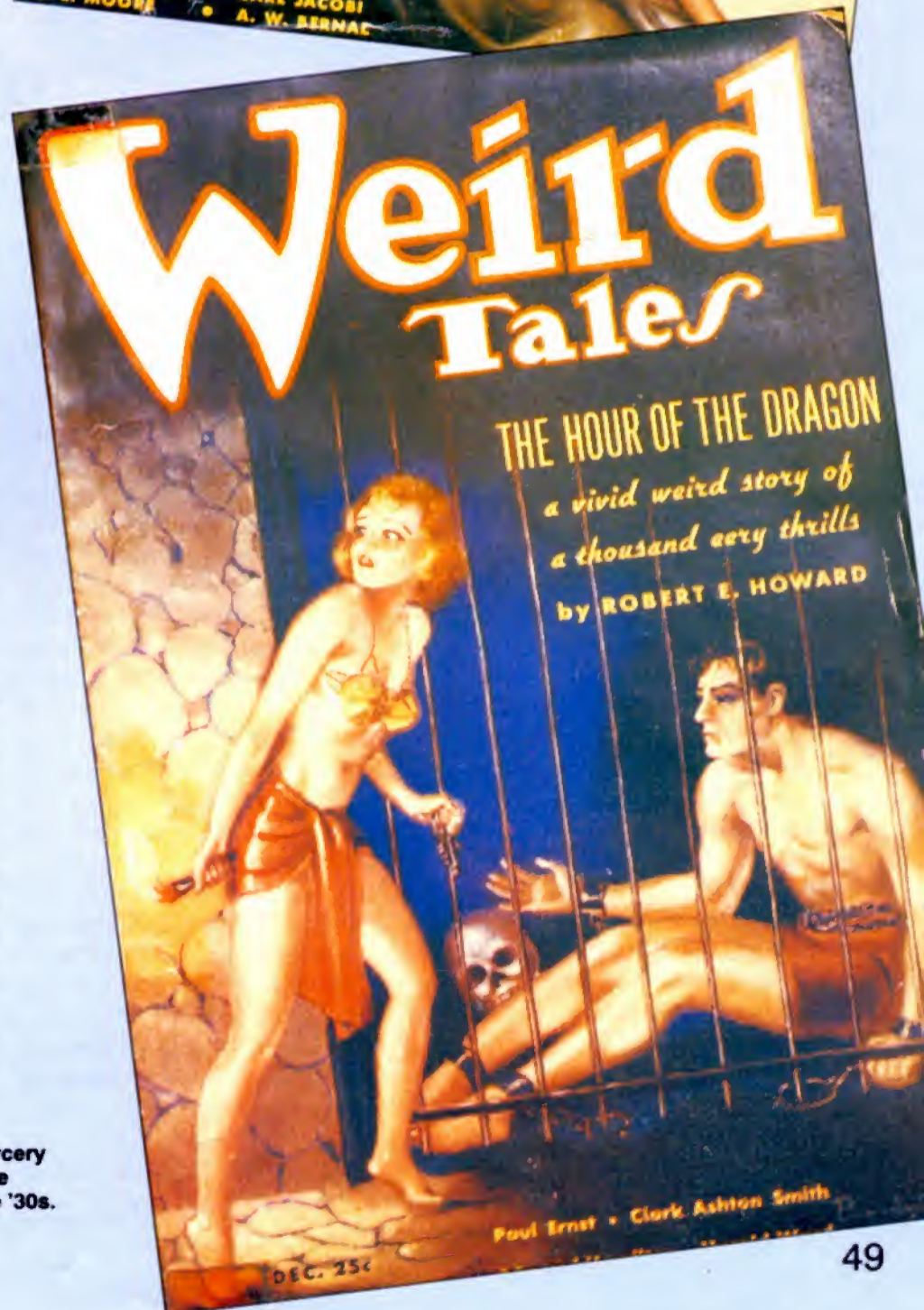
lion, including prints. Vincent D'Onofrio (who has a producer credit on the film) spent \$10,000 of his own money to pay for the rental of a Greyhound bus for one of the last scenes, and to pay the musicians to do the film's music.

Olivia D'Abo was originally cast as Novalyne, but she had to bow-out of the production at the last minute because she was six months pregnant. She was replaced by Renee Zellweger, a Texas actress whose genre credits include the remake of THE TEXAS CHAINSAW MASSACRE, and who has also appeared in such films as LOVE AND A .45, REALITY BITES and DAZED AND CONFUSED. Her work on THE WHOLE WIDE WORLD so impressed people that she was cast in the forthcoming Tom Cruise film, JERRY MAGUIRE.

"Renee came to me about two weeks before we started pre-production," said Ireland. "My casting director said, 'You must see this girl. She's great.' And I had no idea, even when I met her, just how great she'd be. I needed an actress that could steal scenes from [Vincent], especially towards the end. He's a hard guy to steal scenes from."

Zellweger gives an outstanding performance in the film. In describing what attracted her to the part, Zellweger noted, "I thought it was an incredible story. It's not every day that a slice of life film comes along like this. And it's also so interesting that this guy was such a pariah in his town. I thought that was pretty fascinating in itself, how this man managed to survive as long as he did, sanely, in that small town, with his idealism."

Howard virtually created the sword & sorcery genre in riveting stories about Conan, the Barbarian in *Weird Tales* magazine in the '30s.



THE WHOLE WIDE WORLD

A life of romance and contradictions.

During the 1930s, Robert E. Howard cast a long shadow in the domain of pulp fiction where his "Conan the Barbarian" produced imitations even before Howard ended his brief career. He was also notorious around Cross Plains, Texas due to his eccentric ways, but those who truly knew him said that he was a fine man. This film examines Howard from the inside as observed by a woman who spent a great deal of time with him during the years when Howard's short career was arguably at its peak.

While the film is told from the point of view of young Novalyne Price Ellis (played with great sensitivity by Renee Zellweger), her life in those three years becomes largely defined by the ups and downs of her friendship with "Bob Howard."

Initially drawn to Howard because he's a successful, published author, while she collects only rejection slips, the differences in their personalities makes it clear immediately that whatever relationship they develop will not be an indifferent one. She knows what she wants and chooses to become a teacher when it's clear that becoming a writer may take her a very long time. Howard (Vincent D'Onofrio) is bold and passionate about his writing. When Novalyne explains that she wants to write about the real world and admits to jotting down conversations in her journal in order to capture the essence of the way people talk, Howard dismisses the idea because the real world is of no interest of him and the people in it are dull, which is why he writes adventures about far-away places he's never been, featuring larger-than-life characters.

While Howard is shown to be devoted to his sickly mother (more devoted than her doctor husband, it would seem), to Novalyne's eyes Howard was not so obsessive as to avoid any social life. He clearly liked spending time with Novalyne, but just as clearly didn't know how to act around women. If anything, he learned from trial and error while dating Novalyne. Were they lovers? Not in the '90s sense of the word, but Howard did ultimately admit to being in love with Novalyne, but on-



A glimpse at the man who created Conan, Zellweger and D'Onofrio create a bittersweet slice of the '30s.

ly months after he had angrily rejected her professed love for him. To Novalyne, Howard was a wandering spirit, perhaps even a lost soul looking for its center.

The two spent a great deal of time together and we get to see Texas as Howard might have seen it circa 1930s, and in so doing we come to better understand how a young man living in the small town of Cross Plains in the middle of Depression-era Texas could have dreamed up the fantastic adventures he wrote with such alacrity. In one scene Howard and Novalyne stand at the top of a hill, looking down on a magnificent forest with a river running through it, and Novalyne remarks that they can see the whole world from there, to which Howard replies, "and others." In the background drums are briefly heard and we realize that this setting could have easily inspired Howard to write "Beyond The Black River," one of his most powerful stories.

Those who really know Howard's work will also recognize the significance of the passing reference made to Howard's correspondence with H.P. Lovecraft (which actually began earlier than the film implies). Copies

of *Weird Tales* are shown lying around, and at one point Novalyne overhears Howard at work on his typewriter, shouting a story aloud as he writes it. The devoted will recognize the scene in question as being from the Conan story, "The Jewels of Gwahlur."

That Howard was a misfit in Cross Plains is not glossed-over by the film, but it also makes it clear that he did have a social life, however turbulent and wrought with both good times and misunderstandings. This is a simple story gently but sensitively told by screenwriter Michael Scott Myers.

Even the uninitiated cannot help but admire the marvelous grasp of the era the film achieves, including many old cars and the portrayal of a small town with the less hectic pace of life in those days. Contributing largely to the overall effect is the beautiful cinematography of Claudio Rocha, whose night scenes are clear and sharp, while the daylight scenes almost glow with warmth and color. While too many films today are flat and featureless in their cinematography, THE WHOLE WIDE WORLD captures the look of what color films were like when color itself was a new medium for filmmakers to work in and they reveled in the possibilities it presented.

The most debated aspect of Howard's life was his devotion to his mother. The fact remains that Howard killed himself when it was clear that his mother lay at death's door. The film shows Howard being attentive to his mother, but more than anything else we get the sense that he was something of a manic depressive, having extreme highs and lows in his views of life. In this way the portrayal of Howard becomes more well rounded in the film without ever stopping to try to apologize or explain. This is just how Novalyne saw him during those three years, and it is clear that while for a brief time she loved him, she never stopped admiring him.

In the end Howard emerges as passionate and exuberant as any of the heroes he created, but of human dimensions and filled with contradictions. **James Van Hise**

Mrs. Ellis visited the film while it was in production, which made Zellweger nervous at the prospect of meeting the woman she was portraying, but all turned out well. Noted Zellweger, "She was very pleased. I think that she was moved that it was actually happening, that somebody was taking such an interest in Robert Howard because of her perspective on him."

Dan Ireland gave Vincent D'Onofrio extra credit for standing up to the completion bond company when they refused to give Ireland an extra day for shooting. "He was the one that supported me a thousand percent in my vision, and when I had the bond company show up because I was a day behind, wanting to cut scenes, it was Vince that picked up the phone and told them that if they touched my work or if they made me do this or that, he wasn't going to work."

The commitment of the filmmakers is nowhere more evident than in the look of the film, thanks to the vision of the director and the talents of cinematographer Claudio Rocha. The film's imagery is not only bright and alive, but filled with a richness of color rarely seen on screens today. "If you've noticed, ours has a very lush sort of warm glow," said Ireland. "We shot it with a lot of filters. Sometimes they were magenta and sometimes they were yellow, and when we were developing it, I had them keep adding in the magenta when I needed magenta, and the yellow when I needed yellow. I'm very happy with it. I think that the color of this film is very important, because it represents a time and a period and a place. Claudio Rocha is absolutely superb. After I saw [his] PICTURE BRIDE at Sundance, I knew there wasn't anyone else I wanted. He was so exotic. I wanted this film to look exotic, but authentically exotic, not like you wouldn't believe it.

"That's why I shot it in scope, too. I really wanted that landscape. Everyone thought I was out of my mind. It was like a two-character piece and I was shooting it anamorphic and they thought I was insane. It was the deal-breaker. I literally got

CONAN OF CROSS PLAINS

The man behind the literary legend.

\$12,000 for five years work on this movie. I didn't care about that. That didn't bother me. But when they started telling me that I had to shoot it at 1:85 to 1, I said uh, uh. I'm not doing the film because this is how it is. If you want it to look more expensive than the \$1.35 million budget that you're giving me, then I insist upon shooting this scope." The director prevailed.

"When we assembled the first cut it was three hours and 20 minutes, and there was a lot more with all the other characters. And the more I started looking at it, the more it was going down to Bob and Novalyne because that's what it had to be. That's when it sprung to life." The final cut is 111 minutes.

After filming was completed, Dan Ireland phoned Ellis to tell her how it had turned out. "I told her, listen, I want you to understand that the portrayal of these characters is absolutely authentic, but it's mostly on Bob and Novalyne. And I said, 'I have to tell you the truth. It's a very romantic film, and I want you to know that when you told me you never loved Robert, I didn't believe you for a minute.' And she was quiet, and she said, 'Well, maybe I did. Maybe I did.'"

Location work on *THE WHOLE WIDE WORLD* was done in Texas, outside Austin. The limited budget and logistics prevented them from transporting and housing the film company in or near Cross Plains. But you wouldn't know it from looking at the film because everything on screen looks completely authentic. Sometimes fate lent a hand in that.

Ireland had to scramble to find a location for the crucial scene where Howard and Price kiss atop a cliff. "I found that location ten hours before I was supposed to shoot there," said Ireland. "The big moment in the movie. We were originally supposed to go to a place called Enchanted Rock, and I was told at that point that we didn't have enough money and that I had to find a new location, and so it was miraculous that we managed to come up with that." □

Born in Peaster, Texas in 1906, Robert Ervin Howard was a lean, gangly youth who grew into a robust and powerful man. Interested in writing at an early age, he broke into professional writing in 1925 with the sale of "Spear and Fang" to *Weird Tales*.

It was *Weird Tales* where his stories of Kull, Solomon Kane and Bran Mak Morn appeared, and it was also the birthplace of his single most enduring creation, Conan, the Barbarian. The December 1932 issue saw publication of his first Conan story, "The Phoenix on the Sword." Although he only wrote 22 completed Conan stories (including one novel, *Hour of the Dragon*), these stories have not only endured, but shaped the genre of what would come to be variously called Heroic Fantasy or Sword and Sorcery. Unfortunately the genre has largely fallen into disrepute due to its being measured by the bad imitations of Howard rather than by the peak material contributed by Howard himself.

The long road to preserving and reviving interest in Howard's fiction began with the 1946 Arkham House hardback *Skull-face and Others*. It was followed in the '50s by Gnome Press reprinting the Conan stories in five volumes, and then adding a sixth with new Conan stories by L. Sprague de Camp. One of these Gnome Press editions was reprinted by Ace Books in 1953 as *Conan the Conqueror* (the retitled version of the novel *Hour of the Dragon*). It was de Camp who helped to engineer the 1960s' paperback reprints of these Conan stories by Lancer Books. Other new non-Howard Conan stories were added by de Camp and Lin Carter, and all those volumes remain in print today under the Ace Books imprint. Because de Camp edited and revised some of Howard's original Conan stories for this series, Donald Grant chose to reprint the complete original Howard text in a series of hardcovers in the 1970s. Berkeley Books



The real Robert E. Howard, acting out a scene from his fiction, circa 1930.

also reprinted the original Howard Conan text in three volumes (*Red Nails, The People of the Black Circle and Hour of the Dragon*) in the late 1970s in matching hardcover and paperback editions, but that series ended before they could collect all of the original stories.

While Donald Grant has been long praised for the handsome editions he produced of many Howard stories, it was recently revealed that in 1968, when Grant did *Red Shadows*, the first hardcover collection of the Solomon Kane stories, the text was extensively expurgated by Grant to remove any possibly offensive racial references. Researcher Steve Trout found well over a hundred alterations in this book, which was not labeled as being "abridged" when it was published. As a result this text was unknowingly used for all paperback editions for the next 25 years. Only in the 1996 Baen paperback edition *Solomon Kane* is the original *Weird Tales* text finally restored.

By the time Howard killed himself in 1936, he'd written well over 300 stories, most of which were published during that very prolific decade. Some remained unfinished

or unpublished and began to see print in the 1960s and '70s thanks to Glenn Lord, who was then the executor of the Howard estate. A box of original Howard manuscripts, misplaced by one of Howard's friends in the 1940s, was rediscovered in the 1960s and this allowed some previously lost material to be brought into print at last. The 1970s saw the first publication of some important previously unseen Howard stories including "Marchers of Valhalla," "Sword Woman" and "Lord of the Dead."

"Sword Woman," with its clearly feminist main character (she's an unwilling bride who murders the groom in the middle of the wedding ceremony, then escapes to become a mercenary soldier), was decades ahead of its time and could only have been viewed with horror by the pulp fiction editors of the 1930s. It is

thought by some that Novalyne Price may well have been the inspiration for the spirited portrayal of Dark Agnes, its heroine.

But even though Howard is supposedly well-known today for his work, it is arguable how many people know he did anything other than Conan, or even know that he did that since none of the non-Howard Conan books which proliferate today include his name anywhere in the credits. I once asked an average fantasy and science-fiction fan if he knew who created Conan? His reply was "Sir Arthur Conan Doyle." I kid you not.

While nearly all of Howard's fiction was in print at some time during the 1970s, today only about 25% is readily available, requiring fans to haunt used book stores and dealer's catalogues in search of out-of-print titles. What fuels this search is the fact that Howard was a driven writer, and that passion comes through in much of what he wrote. So much so that none of Howard's many imitators have even come close to matching the internal fury that propelled this writer through his brief but memorable career.

James Van Hise

The Preacher's Wife

Denzel Washington is an all too human angel in a love triangle.

By Mike Lyons

Forget the halos, lose the wings and don't listen for the harp. *THE PREACHER'S WIFE* offers up a very different view of angels. "They're capable of emotions and getting themselves into predicaments that previously were left to the human protagonists," noted producer Robert Greenhut, of the film's perspective of heavenly visitors.

Under the direction of Penny Marshall, *THE PREACHER'S WIFE* takes its spiritual cue from the classic 1947 film, *THE BISHOP'S WIFE*, which starred Cary Grant, David Niven and Loretta Young. In this re-make, Denzel Washington plays Dudley, a suave angel who comes down to earth to help answer the prayers of Reverend Henry Biggs (Courtney B. Vance). Reverend Biggs' parish is a poor one and his church is threatened with destruction. Walt Disney's Touchstone Pictures opens the film nationwide December 13.

In the new update, Dudley installs himself in the Reverend's life, enchanting the

Reverend's young son, Jeremiah (Justin Pierre Edmund). In addition, the angel befriends the Reverend's wife Julia (Whitney Houston) breaking a major rule in the angel guidebook.

Dudley becomes smitten with Julia, setting up a unique love triangle and a bit of torn conscience for the angel. "He's not Superman or a fairy godfather," said producer Greenhut of the character. "He's got limits. He has abilities that are supernatural, but he also has human limitations that haven't changed since he left his mortal life."

In the role of Dudley, Denzel

Washington brings a suave demeanor to the character that, according to Greenhut, comes across even when Washington isn't acting. "His presence is so charismatic, in a way that works for an angel. You can just have a shot of him silent and it goes a long way. His intrinsic charm was more than I expected."

Filling such a role, once inhabited by Cary Grant, is no easy task, and neither is re-making a classic and beloved film. According to Greenhut, the filmmakers weren't concerned with the comparisons that come with contemporizing past films.

Producer Robert Greenhut makes a cameo appearance as Gregory Hines shows Courtney B. Vance (Preacher Biggs) a model of the church development.



Penny Marshall helmed the remake based on *THE BISHOP'S WIFE* (1947).

"There are 450 films being made a year, so you have to think about doing some things that have been done before." The producer also said that, beyond the plot of *THE BISHOP'S WIFE*, they tried not to lean too heavily on the original for inspiration. The attraction for re-making the film was the dynamic relationship between Dudley, Julia and the Preacher. "The fact that the angel becomes part of a romantic triangle is very provocative," said Greenhut. "The romantic triangle is something that made *THE BISHOP'S WIFE* unique and that's what we liked about it."

Bringing this story to the screen proved to be no easy task. In an ironic twist, the angels just weren't cooperating. The day before the first day of shooting in Newark, New Jersey and Yonkers, New York, Mother Nature decided to deliver the "Blizzard of '96;" a few months later, a scene which would require the actors to skate on a pond coincided with the Spring thaw, leaving the cast standing in slush. "I think that was a blessing actually," laughed production designer



(Clockwise from right) Oscar-winner Denzel Washington, Justin Pierre Edmund, Darvel Darvis Jr., Jenifer Lewis, Courtney B. Vance and Whitney Houston.

PRODUCER ROBERT GREENHUT

“Whether it’s a kid in a man’s body [BIG] or an angel arriving to help a family, you have to take it seriously. You can’t be embarrassed by that little bit of fantasy.”

“You have to fall this side of reality,” noted Greenhut. “You have to address everything as though it’s real and that rule of thumb is definitely applied to *THE PREACHER’S WIFE*. Whether it’s a kid in a man’s body, which is impossible, or an angel arriving to help a family, which we think is impossible, you have to take it seriously. You can’t be embarrassed by that little bit of fantasy.” He also adds, “You want to root for the people and feel for them and get involved with them. If they’re doing things that are totally ‘out of whack’ with what you’d be doing, it becomes a different type of experience, you detach from it emotionally.”

One of the major emotional draws in *THE PREACHER’S WIFE* will no doubt be music. With the addition of a gospel choir, not to mention the voice of Whitney Houston, the story has been infused with a new dynamic. Greenhut noted that he realized early on in the production process that music was going to play a tremendous role in the film. “Months before we started shooting, we had the principal actors go through a reading of the script. We got to a point where there’s a notation in the script that somebody sings ‘Joy to the World.’ So, Whitney just started singing an

acappella version of ‘Joy to the World.’ It was unbelievable! Everything just sort of stopped for a moment.”

This awe-struck spirit continued to infect the cast and crew, while they were shooting. “It’s a movie that has an angel in it, but the real magic was in Whitney’s voice,” noted Groom. “There were many times that we were shooting in the church that it was much more like a church service than it was a film shoot.” In fact, while filming a musical number with the Gospel choir, the cast and crew became so inspired by the music, they didn’t listen to director Marshall’s commands to cut. “One night it just went on for hours,” remembered Greenhut. “It was just this wonderful, spontaneous Gospel jam session. I hope that some of the emotion that we enjoyed translates to the film in some way.”

Producer Robert Greenhut also added that it was amazing to see how filming *PREACHER’S WIFE* had such an impact on everyone involved. “An electrician walked up to me one day and said, ‘I just want you to know that we’re really happy to be working on this kind of film. Everything else I’ve been working on has been violent or sensationalistic material.’ He couldn’t tell me how pleased he was to just be doing a film that was about caring, love and basic values.”

Designer Bill Groom noted that such feelings probably stem from *THE PREACHER’S WIFE*’s universal message, which he said stated that, “We should look at what we have. We should value where we are in life. There’s also an element of making things better, that when you’re faced with problems, not abandoning problems, but finding ways to solve them. In the process, you’re strengthened and made better from it.” □

Bill Groom.

To help establish the look of *PREACHER’S WIFE*, Groom took some extra pains during the pre-production process. “One thing that Penny and I did, early on, is we met with some ministers of the same denomination as our minister in the film. We talked about the pressures of the minister and a lot of ideas grew out of that.”

One of these ideas was the fact that the location and the architecture in the film shouldn’t be too much like the quaint small town of the original and yet, at the same time, shouldn’t be too much a part of the urban ’90s either. “It’s a story that spans many generations,” noted Groom. “It’s a contemporary story and a timeless story at the same time. Once you determine that that’s the idea, then the look of the film sort of falls in place.”

Director Marshall also wanted to employ a similar feel that can be found in her last genre film, 1988’s *BIG*. Like that film, *THE PREACHER’S WIFE* is a fantasy with its feet firmly planted in real life. Just as Marshall had convinced au-

diences that a boy inhabiting a man’s body could indeed get a job in Manhattan, she knew that audiences had to believe that an angel could just walk into this neighborhood. “Angels don’t always make big spectacular appearances,” said Groom, “they’re not show-offs. Angels are there to put a hand on the shoulder. Traditionally, angels are really messengers. In this case, the message to Henry is really to look around and to look at himself and see what he has—his family, his congregation and his community—and not to give up on those things.”

Whitney Houston (left) as Julia Biggs, wife of a troubled preacher, whose prayers for guidance are answered in the guise of an angel named Dudley (Denzel Washington.)



John Travolta Michael

Director Nora Ephron takes a different look at Heaven's number one angel.

By Scott Tracy
Griffin

If you have any preconceptions about angels, leave them behind before going to see MICHAEL. The Turner Pictures production, starring John Travolta, offers a decidedly off-beat view of the most famous member of the heavenly host and God's emissary, the angel, Michael. New Line Cinema opens the film nationwide December 20.

MICHAEL, which was co-written, directed, and produced by Nora Ephron (SLEEPLESS IN SEATTLE), concerns the quest of a crew of tabloid journalists investigating a report that the archangel Michael is living in Iowa. What they find belies their (and the audience's) expectations. Michael is a scruffy, average Joe-type with prodigious wings. Though obviously not a garden variety homo sapiens, Michael doesn't behave like an angel, either.

"He's a very naughty angel; he loves earthly things, like women and beer and having a wonderful time," said Delia Ephron, executive producer, co-writer, and Nora's sister. "He's a tremendously passionate character. Nora and I believe that fun is an underrated quality. Michael is a person who makes the most of every moment, and that's very engaging. He's a joybug, like John Travolta, so it was a very good match in temperament."

The skeptical journalists soon find out that Michael is indeed real, and that he has a special purpose for his earthly visit. Everyone's destiny will be affected, including cynical head reporter Frank Quinlan (William Hurt), "angel expert" Dorothy Winters (Andie MacDowell), journalist



Director Nora Ephron (r) and sister Delia (l), co-author and executive producer, during filming. They acquired the story from another director, after that project fell through.

sidekick Huey Driscoll (Robert Pastorelli) and Sparky the mutt, the magazine's mascot with his own column (albeit, one ghosted by Huey). Among the other players in this saga are *National Mirror* publisher Malt (Bob Hoskins), who has demanded a live angel with the tabloid crew's jobs at stake; Pansy Milbank (Jean Stapleton), the Iowan whose letter alerts the magazines to Michael's visit; and Teri Garr as Judge Esther Newberg.

Michael's journey to the screen took several years. Penned by journalists Peter Dexter and Jim Quinlan, and based on Quinlan's experiences with *The National Enquirer* in the mid-1970s, the screenplay was in the hands of another director when Nora and Delia discovered it. After the initial project didn't pan out, they acquired the rights and rewrote it as a romantic comedy.

Michael offered a unique challenge to visual effects supervisor Stephen Rosenbaum and his crew from Sony Imageworks. They were charged with creating wings that

blended seamlessly into Travolta's performance, providing the illusion of one organic entity. Rosenbaum is a recent transplant to Imageworks, having followed his mentor, longtime Industrial Light and Magic (ILM) employee Ken Ralston south in January to turn Imageworks into a competitive force in the industry. After its launch, nearly four years ago, Imageworks garnered accolades for its work on SPEED, MONEY TRAIN, and JAMES AND THE GIANT PEACH before recruiting Ralston to head the company.

"ILM does many things well, and we were offered the opportunity to do something equally as wonderful," commented Rosenbaum of his transfer. Rosenbaum, who joined ILM's six initial employees shortly after graduating from U.C. Berkeley, labored for eight years under the tutelage of Ralston, and witnessed the birth of the computer generated effects industry firsthand. "THE ABYSS was our breakthrough project," stated Rosenbaum. "In the effects business, that was the first indication that computer graphics was here to stay, that it could play a pivotal role in how we do effects work."

"From that point on, the industry quickly changed," Rosenbaum continued. "Over the course of three years, the traditional means of doing effects work switched its focus entirely into computer generated-effects, meaning 3D characters and 2D compositing techniques. These things could easily be done in the computer graphics world, especially by the time we did TERMINATOR 2."

Among Rosenbaum's other credits at



Above: Travolta, outfitted with wings designed, constructed and operated by Amalgamated Dynamics. Right: Preparing the actor for the complex effects shot and camera moves.



“He’s a very naughty angel; he loves earthly things, like women and beer and having a wonderful time. He’s a joybug, like John.”

—Exec. Producer Delia Ephron—

out the wings.

Studley, who cut her teeth in Jim Henson’s London Creature Shop, is rapidly garnering a reputation for her work in the industry. After working on *THE FLINTSTONES*, her next project, *BABE*, netted an Oscar; current projects include Eddie Murphy’s take on *DR. DOOLITTLE* and the live-action *GEORGE OF THE JUNGLE*.

Stiffy was crafted by Karen Keener, and took two months to complete, including six

ILM were *JURASSIC PARK*, *DEATH BECOMES HER*, and *FORREST GUMP*, for which the team won an Academy Award.

Rosenbaum remains an adherent of the school that recognizes the importance of physical models, however. “Everybody thinks computers are a budget’s saving grace; in truth, we’re pushing the envelope even more, creating a need for additional R and D and more money,” he commented.

The physical effects for Michael were provided by Amalgamated Dynamics Incorporated (ADI). They include Michael’s wings, a belligerent bull that has a dispute with the archangel, and Sparky’s animatronic alter-ego, dubbed “Stiffy.” Animatronic model designer Kate Studley was responsible for four different versions of Michael’s wings. The eight-foot wide rod-puppet hero wings were mounted on a plate attached to a vest that Travolta wore under his clothing. The wings were articulated by two puppeteers, who were later removed through the magic of computers.

Folded wings were attached directly to Travolta’s back for a shirtless scene, and required painstaking attention to detail. A vacuform of Travolta’s body was made, and the light-

weight wings designed to fit to the actor’s back. A pair of servo motors in Travolta’s boxer shorts provided the wings with a realistic bobbing effect.

A top half set of wings was created to allow Travolta to drive a car, while a bottom half set was used in a dancing sequence focusing on the angel’s fancy footwork. Initially hired to craft the hero wings, Studley was asked to stay on the duration of the project, filmed in Austin, Texas and Chicago, as the “wing wrangler.”

“John never complained,” emphasized Studley, despite long sessions to fit the folded wings, and glue individual feathers directly to his back to provide a realistic appearance. Travolta’s sense of humor and store of old movies provided the makeup crew with entertainment while they went about the exacting chore, which took an hour every morning and every afternoon, since Travolta removed the wings for lunch.

One challenge to the filmmakers was the fact that there are no bird feathers large enough for an angel’s flight feathers. Studley improvised, creating artificial feathers through vacuforming, and used bleached turkey, goose, and chicken feathers to fill

weeks of punching in the hair by hand, one strand at a time. The result was so convincing that the model became the unofficial crew mascot. The final model for the production, a Spanish bull, was a puppet akin to the one lowered into the raptor pen in *JURASSIC PARK*. ADI partner Tom Woodruff, Jr. operated the bull from inside, with the aid of eight puppeteers.

Angels are a popular trend in contemporary pop culture, and Travolta’s earthy interpretation provides an interesting counterpoint to the usual pious versions. Ephron was astounded to learn that 69% of Americans in a recent poll professed a belief in the heavenly intercessors, and attributes it to our trying times. “I think people need more spirituality than what exists around them,” she said. “This world has become more difficult to live in; there’s a need to have a larger spiritual life.”

When asked why a mighty warrior of heaven like Michael would concern himself with two mortals’ love lives, Ephron replied, “Because the battlefield of love is as challenging as any battle in life.” □

BEAVIS AND BUTT-HEAD DO AMERICA

MTV's animated kings of slack get off

By Mike Lyons

Aliens attacking the White House and monstrous tornadoes tearing up farms are nothing compared to this big screen shock—Beavis and Butt-Head have made a movie! Yes, those two lovable morons, who separate everything into the categories: “Cool” and “Sucks” will be starring in **BEAVIS AND BUTT-HEAD DO AMERICA**, which Paramount opens nationwide December 20.

Since premiering on TV in 1993, Beavis and Butt-Head have taken off with a popularity that surprises even creator Mike Judge. “I try not to think about it too much,” he admitted. “I’ve always tried to go for the belly-laughs stuff, just following my instincts and never questioning them.”

Judge majored in physics in college and after graduating, worked for the government on fighter plane electronic test systems. Soon after, Judge decided to change jobs and pursued more creative endeavors by moving into a career in music. One night, he went to an animation festival at a local theatre, which led to an obsession with the medium.

In 1991, after making some home-made, animated short subjects with an old movie camera, Judge came up with two teenage characters, one a blond, bug-eyed wild man and the other a dim fellow, saddled with braces. The looks for the two characters came to Judge while trying to draw a caricature of a high school classmate. “The version that became Beavis, for some reason, I drew him with a lighter in one hand and a locust in the other,” laughed Judge. “I don’t know what I was thinking. It just seemed to go with his expression. The other one was one of these situations where I just scribbled and came back to my sketchbook like a week or two later, saw the picture and it actually made me laugh.”

Beavis and Butt-Head made their debut



Beavis & Butt-head creator Mike Judge with MTV animation director Yvette Kaplan, rendering the characters in the glory of hand-painted cel animation.

in the short, and self-explanatory, film **FROG BASEBALL**, which was part of 1992’s **SICK AND TWISTED FESTIVAL OF ANIMATION**. Even during the production of their first film, Judge knew he was on to something with the characters. “I remember a girl at the film lab saying, ‘They’re cute.’ And I thought, ‘Really?! These are ugly, obnoxious guys, batting around a frog and acting like idiots.’”

Soon after, Beavis and Butt-Head became part of MTV’s show **LIQUID TELEVISION**, which features cutting edge animation and filmmaking. From here, the two “kings of slack” got their own show, which consisted of them sitting vacant-eyed in front of their TV, verbally decimating whatever music video happens to be on. When they would venture off the couch, it was usually to look for trouble and wreak havoc.

Thus, a pop-culture phenomena of gargantuan proportions was born. The two characters were splattered across every piece of merchandise available and even became embroiled in a controversy. An episode which aired in October of 1993 is said to have inspired a young Ohio boy to set fire to his

house and since then, the show has become the target of many groups railing against violence in television. Judge, however, defended his creation, saying, “I still maintain that they’re not mean-spirited. It’s all very innocent. They may be doing awful things, but it’s motivated out of just screwing around and not knowing any better.”

Having made it through said controversy, the two boys now move onto even bigger territory with their film **BEAVIS AND BUTT-HEAD DO AMERICA**. “I really want people to know that this movie is absolutely not going to be an hour and a half of them on the couch,” said Judge. In order to get the boys out of their usual environment, Judge came up

with an ingenious plot point. “I always thought that the movie had to begin with the TV being stolen, that would keep them from going back to their living room.”

Beavis and Butt-Head go in search of their most prized possession and run into a sleazy hood named “Muddy,” who mistakes the two intrepid explorers for hit men he’s hired to kill his ex-wife. When he asks Beavis and Butt-Head if they’ll take \$10,000 to “do” his ex-wife, the two overtly horny teenagers connote a new meaning for “do” and quickly agree. The boys are off to Vegas, where events continue to snowball, culminating with a cross country trek with Muddy, his ex-wife and two ATF agents, while being chased by a group of tourists.

Never once was there any reluctance on the part of Beavis and Butt-Head’s creator to bringing his characters to the screen. “I was actually really into it,” admitted Judge. “It wasn’t like I was going around saying, ‘This must be a movie!’ But when they called I was like, ‘Oh yeah. You bet ya.’”

Like many past TV-to-movie segues, Judge said he knew he didn’t want **BEAVIS AND BUTT-HEAD** to look as if it was

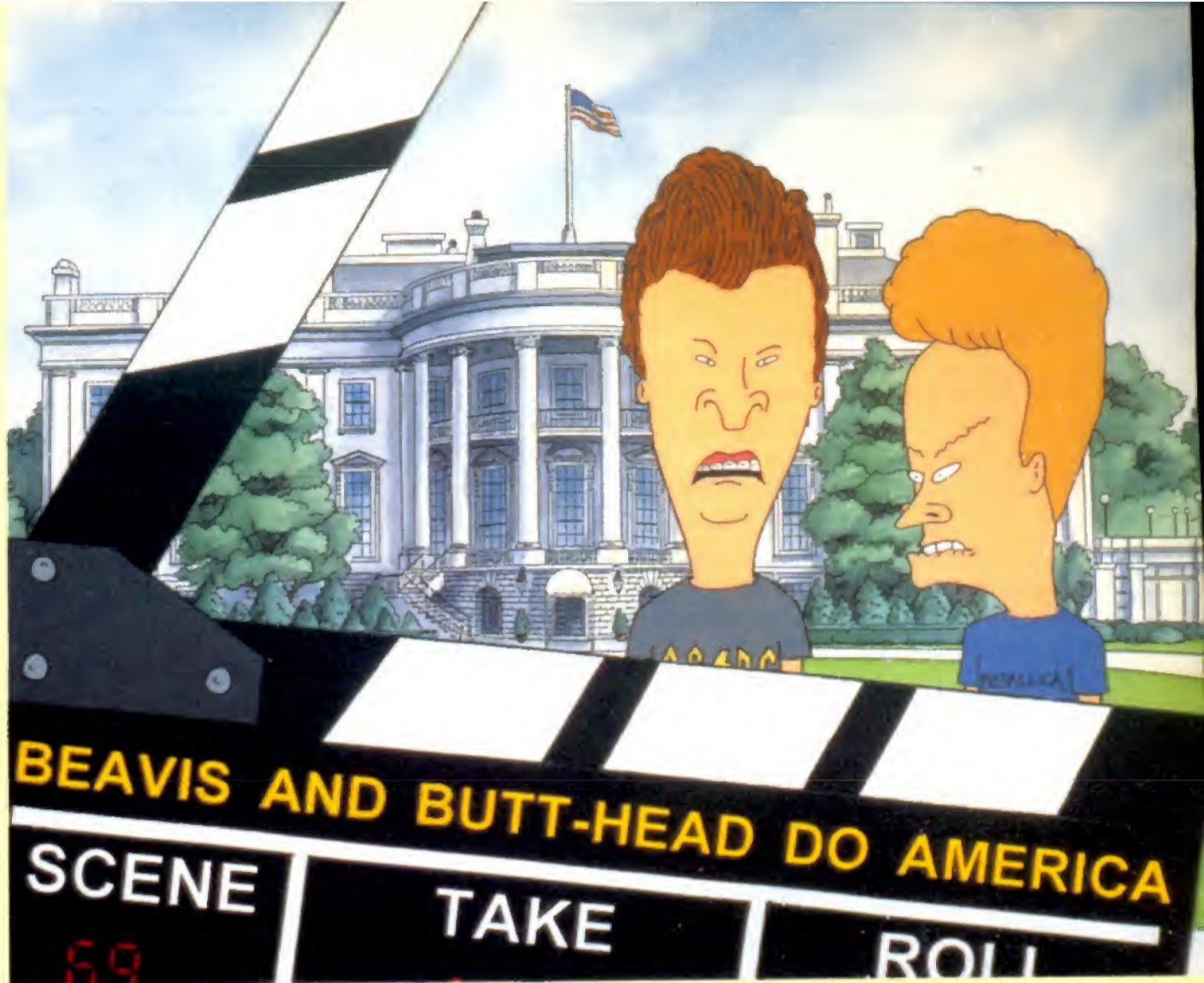
the couch.

"stretching" its situation for the big screen. "It's tricky," he noted. "The temptation is, for the convenience of writing your plot, to make the characters smarter than they are. But you really have to take the harder path, which is to keep them completely in character from beginning to end."

For inspiration, Judge turned to another big screen moron. "I love Peter Sellers' movies—the SHOT IN THE DARK and THE PINK PANTHER movies—and in those, Clouseau was never sappy, he was never smart, he was always a bumbling idiot through the whole thing, and yet there was always a story."

Judge has used this observation as inspiration for BEAVIS AND BUTT-HEAD DO AMERICA, which he co-wrote with Joe Stillman. But, as he does on the show, Judge proved to be a real Renaissance man when it comes to Beavis and Butt-Head. Not only does he also direct the film, but, as he has done since their debut, he will also provide the voices for the two protagonists. For inspiration in this area, Judge once again went back to his aforementioned high school classmate. "He wasn't anything like Beavis, he was actually a straight-A student who sat in the front of the class. But, he had this laugh, where he used to bite his lower lip. So it started out as just me doing that and kind of evolved into something else. I don't know what I was thinking with Butt-Head. I was trying to just make the stupidest, most vacant sound I could make."

For Judge, an equal challenge has come in animating the two characters for the film. Part of the show's appeal, like ROCKY AND BULLWINKLE, is actually BEAVIS AND BUTT-HEAD's lack of fluid animation; the scrawl-like drawings look as if they belong in the margins of a high school student's notebook.



The MTV comic slackers get off their couch and away from their tube for a little political commentary, opening from Paramount on December 20.

For BEAVIS AND BUTT-HEAD DO AMERICA, Judge has tried to apply fuller animation, while still retaining the "low-budget feel" of the show. "The shots are more cinematic with dramatic angles," said Judge. "But, we're keeping Beavis and Butt-Head intact, as far as the way they talk and their look. They absolutely look and talk the same. The show, in the last few seasons, has gotten a lot fuller without losing any of the charm of the way that they move. The movie takes this to the next level."

Judge also added that audiences may indeed be surprised by the look of the film. "It looks really great on the big screen. It's

done traditionally, inked and painted on cels and shot on film. People haven't seen that in a while. The computer method that's used nowadays in all the major features looks pretty good, but there's a real nice kind of softness to cels and the watercolor backgrounds we're using."

From the doodle scratched in Mike Judge's sketchbook to the big-screen, it's been quite a ride for Beavis and Butt-Head, and an interesting ride for their creator as well. "I really feel like I've been separate from it," said Judge. "I've gone on TV, I've gone on LET-TERMAN and that was really great. Every now and then, it will really freak me out. But,

when the show was really hitting big, like the summer of '93, I moved to New York with my wife and had one kid at the time. I would take the train home and we would sit in our little condo and didn't know anybody. There was really nothing glamorous or exciting, it was just a lot of work."

Mike Judge admits, however, that all this work pays off, and he continues to get "freaked out" each time he sees a few moments from BEAVIS AND BUTT-HEAD DO AMERICA. "It's funny to see these beautifully painted backgrounds and huge things happening and then cut to Beavis and Butt-Head going, 'Huh-huh-huh.'" □

Beavis & Butt-Head go disco, a sumptuous cartoon look that retains the economy of the TV show's limited animation look.



COMING

By Dan Persons

A case of pneumonia pretty much took me out of the game for the bulk of the summer, so I wasn't able to impart my unique spin to much of the season's output. Before we get too far into these dark days of winter, though (and at the risk of permanently antagonizing the guys who actually pay me for this stuff), I just wanted to say, in all humbleness, that *TWISTER* sucked! My God! It was so stupid!! And boring!!! I don't know how this thing wound up becoming one of the top grossers of the year. I don't know how the thing got funded! I tell ya, if they come up with a *TWISTER II*, it'll demonstrate not only a total bankruptcy of creativity in Hollywood, but also will serve as concrete evidence of the complete collapse of Western civilization.

PLAYING THE FUTURE CARD.

Despite the grouching above, there are signs that all may not be lost in the world of feature filmmaking. Take, for instance, Fresco Pictures, an L.A. start-up which has shelled out \$400,000 for the entire literary catalog of the much-praised, and occasionally controversial, science fiction author, Orson Scott Card. At the same time, Fresco has gone into partnership with producer Bob Chartoff (*THE RIGHT STUFF*, *RAGING BULL*), pledging itself to a total of \$1.5 million to purchase Card's Nebula and Hugo award-winning novel, *Ender's Game*. Sonuvagun, some people in Hollywood do read books!

While the handsome purchase price allows Card the freedom to rub elbows with the likes of Joe Eszterhas (if he really feels like slumming), the author himself admitted that money was not the only criterion by which he decided who would produce his story of a young boy's grueling indoctrination into the realities of interplanetary warfare. "*Ender's Game* has been on the market for years," the author explained. "I've had a steady stream of inquiries ever since it was published in hardcover back in '85. But everybody always had the standard, Hollywood approach, which is: 'Oh, you're a genius! This is wonderful, it's brilliant... Here's how we'll fix it.' And the way that they would fix it is to turn it into *THE LAST STARFIGHTER*, invariably: make Ender a teenager and give him a love interest. I



Orson Scott Card (L) has nurtured the screen rights to his science fiction saga of a young boy's grueling indoctrination into interplanetary warfare.

just wasn't terribly interested in taking *Ender's Game* and turning it into any [other] story. I had to keep Ender young.

"I learned after the first option that was taken on it—which fortunately was by the same producer who did *ENEMY MINE*, so when that tanked, he lost all ability to get funding for ambitious science-fiction projects, and so the option lapsed—but I learned my lessons from what he was going to do to butcher the story. From then on, I had it as a clause in the contract: no matter what, Ender must be played as under 12 years of age. And, boy, that sent most people scampering away."

Those that did bite were not necessarily those that Card was eager to have digging their talons into his brainchild. Said the author, "Some of them were so cute; they thought they could fool me. They'd have a clause in the contract that said, 'Ender will be played 12 years old, give or take four years.' Like I can't do the math. Or they would make their 'best effort' to portray Ender under 12 years of age, which meant two guys sit in a room and go, 'Well, whaddya think, should we make Ender 12? Naaaaaaah.' And there it is, you've just had the discussion.

"Along came another production company a few years ago that agreed to that par-

ticular [clause], but they also agreed that I would write the screenplay, and there were certain, strict statements about what they had to pay me before they had a screenplay written. But they had one written anyway, by somebody else. I won't mention any names, but he was at the time an intern with them, and may well have been innocent in intention, though I've since heard that he's been marketing it himself, which is a real no-no and he needs to stop. I never read it. They told me that they'd had it done 'just to test out the special effects prices.' Of course, I would write my draft, but they insisted that I read [the alternate version]. Well, I didn't. I refused. I wouldn't do it; I'm not going to let anybody say that I adapted my screenplay from somebody else. I'm going to adapt it from my book."

The option with that company mercifully lapsed, and Card was eventually free to sign-on with Fresco and Chartoff Productions, who not only agreed to the age requirements and the price, but also set Card loose on his own screenplay and promised him a producer's slot in the credits. Drafts were being ironed out in the fall of '96, with the hopes of sending the project around to the studios not long after. While a compression of the book's six year time frame should make casting of the crucial child roles easier, no talent—either before or behind the camera—has been attached. For his part, Card claimed to be campaigning for Mel Gibson as director.

One man pitted against an army of camera-struck pre-adolescents. Now that is a Braveheart.

MISSING DIRECTOR HITS THE LOST HIGHWAY

The road to innovation is seldom a smooth one. Just ask David Lynch, who stirred up tectonic shock waves in Hollywood with such delirious features as *BLUE VELVET* and the cult TV show *TWIN PEAKS*, then came a-cropper with the *PEAKS* prequel feature *FIRE WALK WITH ME* (even European audiences booed it) and the ill-fated television comedy *ON THE AIR* (a series so reviled that one critic dubbed it the worst show in the history of television—a bit of an overreaction, I think; the guy apparently never saw *SUPERTRAIN*). Lynch's reaction was both understandable and prudent: keep a low profile, turn his efforts to uncredited commercial work, and plot his return. This February will see whether the director's extended hiatus has been a beneficial one, when October Films re-

ATTRACTIONS

leases Lynch's latest effort, **LOST HIGHWAY**.

Don't expect that the years have mellowed the famously idiosyncratic director. In synopsis, **LOST HIGHWAY** reads as pure Lynch: there's **ID4**'s Bill Pullman, playing a jazz saxophonist, whose marriage to Patricia Arquette is shattered when the man is accused of murder and ends up on death row. From that Hitchcockian kick-off, the film then takes a sharp left-turn into the stratosphere as the incarcerated Pullman undergoes a profound physical transformation, emerging eventually as none other than Balthazar Getty (**LORD OF THE FLIES**, **WHITE SQUALL**). Add in nocturnal murders in the Mojave desert, gross-out autopsy sequences, and a quick, first-person guided tour inside the human skull, and you can practically hear the die-hard **ERASERHEAD** fans weeping for joy.

"It didn't seem like [Lynch] was trying to prove anything," said Michael Burnett, who developed the film's extensive makeup effects and logged considerable time on-set with the director. "I never got that feeling. The spontaneity was a lot more than usual. That made it more difficult, because things would change, scheduling-wise, and when you're doing prosthetics, which requires sculpting and molding and casting and everything, and you're working on a budget, it's not like you can just say, 'Oh, let's shoot this tomorrow,' and throw five guys on it so they can stay up all night and finish it. There were a couple of times where that was a tough one: the schedule would change and something that was going to be shot later got moved up, or the way it was to be shot changed at the last minute. Just kinda thinking on our feet, we would have to come up with a way to create that effect in less time, or with some different technique."

What made it worthwhile, according to Burnett, was the opportunity to play around in the director's twisted, little world-view: "The most Lynchian shot in the movie, I thought, was the shot where the coroner is in the lab, examining a body, and he throws a cigarette down and the camera pans down and follows the cigarette into the drain and there's little bits of flesh and hair in the drain. I had to get down there and help David put that all together."

Sounds like a perfect Lynch moment.



Above: David Lynch directing Balthazar Getty in **THE LOST HIGHWAY**, after his transformation from Bill Pullman, opening in February by October Films.

Welcome home, Dave.

TRAILERS

Summer was pretty much a wash for me (although at the lowest ebb I was under the rather cool delusion that poet Jim Carrol was trying to reprogram my brain—very **THIRD ROCK MEETS BASKETBALL DIARIES**, don'tcha think?). Fortunately, I snapped out of my delirium just in time to see things get very interesting in the film industry. To wit... After months of rumors, Disney announced a distribution deal with media giant Tokuma Shoten Publishing Co., which will include the worldwide video release of eight features by anime master Hayao Miyazaki. Included in the deal will be Miyazaki's upcoming film, **PRINCESS MONONOKE** (and we can only hope that the contract will also incorporate such prior titles as **NAUSICAA OF THE VALLEY OF WIND** and the excellent **KIKI'S DELIVERY SERVICE**)... Kevin Costner is going for a slightly drier brand of science fiction with **THE POSTMAN**, his first directorial effort since **DANCES WITH WOLVES**. Based on the David Brin novel, with a script by Eric Roth and Brian Koppelman, the Warner Bros. film follows the adventures of a stoic loner who holds post-apocalyptic civilization together by assuming the role of die-hard letter carrier for the survivors. Just make sure you get that postage right, scumbag... Voices signed for the upcoming **GEN 13** animated feature: Alicia Witt will play the well-sculpted Caitlin Fairchild; Red Hot Chili Peppers' Flea has been chosen for the role of über-slacker Grunge; head-honcho Lynch has been given to John deLancie, while Mark Hamill will voice

(big shock!!) villain Threshold...

Senator Film Productions' ads for the apparently animated German feature **WERNER** come stamped with the legends, "100% **TRICK FILM**," and "**THE FASTEST KRAUT IN TOON**." I have no idea what these phrases mean... Polygram Filmed Entertainment will release **PHOTOGRAPHING FAIRIES**, a fantasy in which a photographer sets out to debunk a series of supernatural photographs and discovers, to disastrous effect, that the images are real. Principal photography started in September '96, under the direction of Nick Willing... Spumco's coming back. The

REN AND STIMPY shop has already delivered a combo live-action/animated music video for Bjork, and has signed with Hanna-Barbera to produce a series of three, seven-minute shorts featuring **YOGI BEAR**'s Ranger Smith character... Angela Bassett has signed on to join Jodie Foster, Matthew McConaughey, James Woods, and John Hurt in the upcoming Warner Bros.' film, **CONTACT**. Director Robert Zemeckis gets back to the genre with this adaptation of the Carl Sagan/Ann Druyan book... Yes, they're finally getting around to bringing **LOST IN SPACE** to the big screen. Akiva Goldsman has written the script, Stephen Hopkins will direct, New Line will release. My only concern is that, at this rate, we'll have to wait thirty years for that **HOMEBOYS IN OUTER SPACE** feature to be released.

EH, WHAT'S (BANKR)UP(T), DOC?

Hey, how about that **SPACE JAM**, huh? Frankly, spending a reported \$100 million on a live-action/animation hybrid based on, of all things, a TV commercial would seem a dubious proposition in any year. If this flies, though, think of the repercussions: do you *really* want to go to the multiplex and discover that the only thing you can get for your eight bucks is a romantic comedy featuring that puffy, little troll from the Nissan commercials?

I didn't think so. Sweet dreams. □



FILM RATINGS

- Must See
- Excellent
- Good
- Mediocre
- Poor

BEASTMASTER III: THE EYE OF BRAXUS

Directed by: Gabrielle Beaumont. WB syndication. 5/96, 2 hrs. With: Marc Singer, Tony Todd, Keith Coulouris, Sandra Hess, Casper Van Dien, Patrick Kilpatrick, Lesley-Anne Down, David Warner.

This is the third in the BEASTMASTER film series, the first being far back in 1982, so the most amazing thing about it is that original lead Marc Singer's body is still suitably muscular and photogenic. There are a lot of bad wigs in evidence in this sword and sorcery tale, which takes itself far too seriously instead of trying for a light touch. The plot is all about chasing the McGuffin of a pendant that is the key to some kind of magic but when it is finally unlocked, out pops a cute little monster (courtesy of the Chiodo Brothers) who looks more like one of the Henson DINOSAURS than anything menacing.

I like animals more than I like people, so I am rigidly opposed to their use in films, especially when they have to perform stunts. In the first BEASTMASTER film, a lovely tiger died from being painted black, a pointless waste of life. This time around, a male lion (who looks medicated throughout the entire film—he's always yawning and his mouth hangs thirstily open) is trapped in a net and tormented by spears for far too long, which makes the fictitious nastiness of villain David Warner pale in comparison.

● Judith Harris

THE BURNING ZONE

UPN Weekly Series. 9/96, 60 mins. With: Jeffrey Dean Morgan, Michael Harris, James Black, Tamlyn Tomita.

X marks the spot. X-FILES, that is. Ever since the Fox series began creeping its way up the Nielsen charts and onto magazine covers, the networks (including Fox themselves) started searching for a clone. This is UPN's entry in the copycat sweepstakes. Like the others, it will disappear quickly, and it won't take Scully and Mulder to discover the reasons why.

On the surface, this has many of the stylistic touches which makes THE X-FILES so mesmerizing: moody, ominous lighting; odd camera angles; and a brooding score. Unfortunately, it doesn't utilize them as effectively. Instead of clandestine government doings and otherworldly phenomena, the plot centers around an ancient virus which can think for itself and control other viruses. Ludicrous? It gets worse. When it takes over a human body it apparently can communicate in English as well—never mind that it's been trapped in a tomb for thousands of years.

Is there actually anyone out there yearning for a weekly series about a deadly outbreak? One fails to see the entertainment value in watching people



Richard B. Katz plays Forrest J Ackerman, the comic co-creator rescued from robbers by VAMPIRELLA (Talisa Soto), not quite as he envisioned her.

become ill. The series concept is DOA from its disastrously limiting premise alone. The show will probably linger on UPN's schedule for a little while, then promptly fade away like a bad cold.

○ Michael Sutton

DARKMAN III: DIE DARKMAN DIE

Directed by Bradford May. MCA/Universal, 8/96, 87 minutes. R. With Jeff Fahey, Arnold Vosloo, Darlance Flugel, Roxann Biggs-Dawson.

The third installment of the DARKMAN series, filmed along with the second, is no improvement. Director Bradford May can expertly create moody lighting, but he lacks originator Sam Raimi's directorial flair (shots from the original keep popping up in rapid montage sequences that are meant to convey explosive emotions but lack any emotional power).

The plot concerns a crime boss, Peter Rooker (Jeff Fahey) who has been secretly selling athletes steroids and sees in Darkman's (Arnold Vosloo) superhuman strength the potential to make millions. Darkman's alter ego Westlake makes use of a physician's high-tech facility to use a DNA sequencer to finally perfect his synthetic skin, only to be ripped-off and have his secret tapped by Rooker, who starts injecting his minions with the formula.

Unfortunately, this film is so ignorant that a doctor does not even know what "control animals" are, the action scenes are blandly routine, KNB Effects provides their usual inexpressive mask makeup, and writers Michael Colleary and Mike Werb do not seem to have figured out what to do with their brutal/sympathetic pulp-style protagonist, who thwarts criminals while not giving a damn about people until he comes to care for Rooker's family.

● Dennis Fischer

HIGHLANDER: 10TH ANNIVERSARY DIRECTOR'S CUT

Directed by Russell Mulcahy. Republic Home Video. 8/96. With: Christopher Lambert, Sean Connery, Clancy Brown, Bertie Edney.

HIGHLANDER: 10th Anniversary

Director's Cut finally delivers the European version American fans have long awaited. Few U.S. fans have seen the extended footage outside of recent HIGHLANDER conventions and bootleg PAL tapes. The anniversary edition delivers, presenting several sequences left out of the original U.S. theatrical and video releases.

Key among them is the World War II scene, in which Conner saves the life of a young girl who grows up to be his secretary, Rachel. While the U.S. version implied a deeper relationship between them, the extra footage confirms it, establishing the basis for a relationship that moves from daughter to lover to mother figure. Also included are extended early scenes of Conner with his clan, Kurgan's stalking of Brenda at a zoo, and censored footage of the Kurgan in the church, cut during its initial release, in which he licks a priest's hand.

Presented in letterboxed format, with a remastered Dolby Surround audio track, the video also includes the original theatrical trailer and video commentary from director Russell Mulcahy and producers Peter Davis and Bill Panzer. Running approximately 21 minutes, the commentary provides some interesting insights, including the fact that the World War II footage was paid for out of Mulcahy, Davis and Panzer's own pockets. Cut from the original script, the scene was later shot with a small video crew after principal production was completed (although it's never explained why the scene still wasn't included in the American version after such expense). Such insights are too few, however. Instead, the commentary is too casual—too "Gee-whiz, look at this movie we made,"—with each member interrupting and talking over the others, making their discussion sometimes hard to follow and understand.

●●● Matthew E. Saunders

SUIKODEN: DEMON CENTURY

Directed by Hiroshi Negishi. A.D. Vision, 8/96, 45 mins. Anime with English subtitles.

Okay, let's run down the martial-arts anime checklist here: post-apocalyptic, urban setting, check. Spiritual subtext about the souls of ancient warriors being reincarnated in order to wage their climactic battle once again, gotcha. Comely, transvestite street-fighter, uhhhhhh... Buff, trigger-happy priest, hmmm-mm... Tattooed, kick-ass ninja nun... now wait a minute! One part standard action set-up—criminal syndicate wants the land an orphanage stands on for its own nefarious ends—and about 20 thousand parts quirky character ties and knowing satire (I just love the cute lil' orphans who cheer the priest on as he unleashes a smart-bomb attack against the villain's stronghold), this anime deconstructs its own plot-points even as it's reveling in them. Director Hiroshi Negishi not only knows how to mount a battle scene—lots of fine animation here—he then takes it in directions you've never considered. My favorite twist: a ratty-looking old derelict who just so happens to be the most deadly assassin in the world—a character so cool you'll be sorry to see him expire at the end (why not reincarnate him as well?). Clearly the first in a series, and a promising start.

●● Dan Persons

THEM

Directed by Bill Norton. UPN, 10/96, 120 mins. With: Scott Patterson, Dustin Voigt, Clare Carey.

UPN did it: came up with an X FILES knock-off so ludicrous that AMERICAN GOTHIC: looks like GLENGARRY GLEN ROSS by comparison. Ostensibly the adventures of a square-jawed meteorologist (Scott Patterson) and his plucky, young nephew (Dustin Voigt) as they battle a group of aliens who want to... well... uh... do something nasty. THEM is such a formless mess that one suspects its creators scripted the thing by incorporating whatever happened to be playing on TV at the moment of writing. Judging by the results, they must have been tuned to a station that runs 24-hour cycles of TWIN PEAKS, HEE-HAW, THE INVADERS, MONTY PYTHON AND THE HOLY GRAIL and an endless stream of Eternity commercials. Best moment: it's a toss-up between the exploding mastiffs and the cigar-smoking dominatrix in the skirtless hoop-skirt.

Chris Carter sleeps a little more soundly tonight. ○ Dan Persons

TRILOGY OF TERROR II

Directed by Dan Curtis. USA Network. 10/96. With: Lysette Anthony, Richard Fitzpatrick, Thomas Mitchell.

You can go home again. Sometimes. Director Dan Curtis apparently discovered that, when all else fails, head for the safety net of past success. After the debacle of his DARK SHADOWS remake, the director has gone back to his 1975 made-for-TV hit, TRILOGY OF TERROR. The film starred Karen Black in a trio of horror tales which

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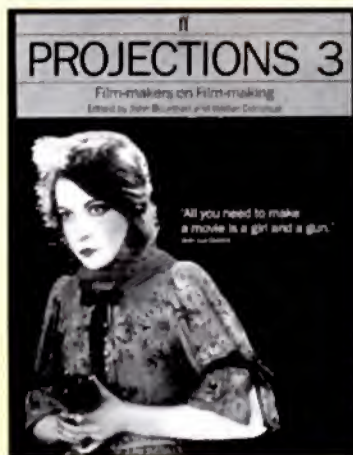


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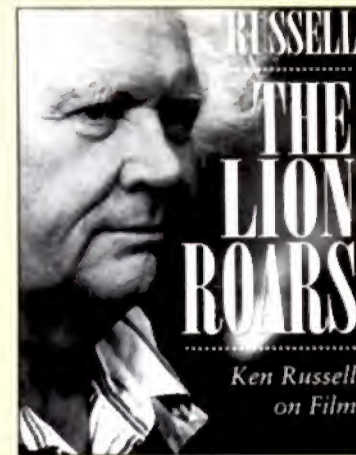
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concluded with the now classic story of a Zuni fetish doll. The new anthology stars Lysette Anthony (KRULL, WITHOUT A CLUE) in three roles. "Graveyard Rats" is based on a claustrophobic Richard Matheson story where greed reaches into the grave and is hampered by Eric Allard's generally unconvincing giant rat effects. A stormy night complete with waves crashing on the rocks below a dark brooding mansion gives atmosphere to the second tale, "Bobby," but the idea is too familiar to offer any real surprises, as Anthony plays the mother of a drowned boy in a new twist on "The Monkey's Paw." The best is saved for last with the return of the evil, nasty little Zuni fetish doll in "He Who Kills." The creature originated in the Matheson short story "Prey." The police find the bodies from the first film and the charred remains of the doll in the oven. They take it to Anthony as anthropologist Dr. Simpson to check for clues. The demon soon gets its hands on a knife and all hell breaks loose. As with the first film, this one episode is right up there with the best of TALES FROM THE CRYPT.

●●● Dan Scapperotti

VAMPIRELLA

Concorde-New Horizons 10/96 90 min. With: Talisa Soto, Roger Daltrey, Richard Joseph Paul, Angus Scrimm.

After 20 years we're still waiting for the real Vampirella to reach the screen. Currently an imposter is making the rounds on Showtime, the cable network. But, it doesn't take long to realize that she is only some deranged

Drakonian standing in for her sister. If you tuned in to see Vampy decked out in her trademark costume you were sadly disappointed. Instead you got Talisa Soto in a mundane pair of red shorts and a bra. The corporate line pegs the costume change on an inability to get the original costume to stay on Soto. Why didn't they try glue? Soto is no more Vampirella than Cathy Lee Crosby was Wonder Woman. The story is your basic revenge plot albeit with a clever outerspace-vampire connection. The inhabitants of the distant planet of Drakulon use a synthetic concoction to quench their thirst for blood. When Vampirella's stepfather is murdered by a band of renegades led by Vlad Tepes (Roger Daltrey), she pursues them over time and space to planet Earth. Here she finds two opposing forces: the vampires, led by Tepes, and PURGE, a paramilitary group headed by Adam Van Helsing (Richard Joseph Paul) out to free the world of these creatures. Vampirella eventually tracks Vlad to the glitter of Las Vegas for their confrontation.

While Wynorski, who also directed this opus and appears at least twice in the film, keeps the action moving, the limited budget gaps are all too evident. They show up in poorly staged car crashes and effects that were old a decade ago. In fact, effects are absent in some scenes and we get to see results rather than the incident. For instance, in the final confrontation between Vlad and Vampirella, she plunges a metal rod through the vam-

pire. He laughingly pulls it out when suddenly we see a streak of lightning. Cut back to Daltrey and he's in flames. We assume the rod was struck by the lightning even though it wasn't on screen. We assume this because we've seen it so many times before.

What should have been the highlight of this year's Roger Corman Presents series on Showtime turned out to be a major disappointment.

If you can't do it right, don't bother. ●● Dan Scapperotti

THE HAWK & THE DOVE

continued from page 27
is based loosely on kids trading cards, so there's not a great deal of depth involved and psychological probing—except on a philosophical level. In this movie the high are brought low and the low are brought high."

The actor added that, despite trading card origins, "You still have to have kind of an emotional truth, and the people, no matter how funny they look, have to be at least treated like they're human beings. I don't know how else you'd react."

As to how the results will play to an audience, Winfield would not venture a guess. "I saw Tim about a month ago. I asked him how it was coming together, because I had been saying, 'It's a very funny movie.' He said, 'Well, you know, I'm not sure this is a funny movie.' I was just sort of dumb-founded.

Everybody was laughing while we were doing it, so why should it suddenly be unfunny? I'm just curious to see what he's doing to it now." □

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LETTERS

MISTAKEN IDENTITY

Regarding "Short Notes" in the October issue [28:4/5:5], please note that it is David (PUPPET MASTER III) DeCoteau, and not Ken Russell, who directed SKELETONS. The film has a cast full of familiar faces, including Christopher Plummer, Dee Wallace Stone, James Coburn, Paul Bartel, Dennis Christopher and Carroll Baker.

Tim Murphy
South El Monte, CA 91733

JAMES CAMERON MEETS PHILIP K. DICK

I read the recent letter "Summing up James Cameron" [28:4/5:62] with great interest. Ernie Hold's reference to the relationship between TERMINATORS I and II and Philip K. Dick's writings was especially accurate. I know this because I was responsible for developing SCREAMERS, based on Philip K. Dick's "Second Variety" in 1979, I gave Cameron a copy of this story and the screenplay treatment I had written, thereby inadvertently initiating his rise into fame and fortune.

For me, SCREAMERS' story began in 1960 when I first read "Second Variety." In 1979 I arranged for the film production company I was then developing movies for to option this short story. Over the next three years, while trying to produce this film, I descended further and further into the sort of topsy-turvy world usually reserved for Phil's fictional characters.

Despite BLADE RUNNER, TOTAL RECALL, and, most recently, SCREAMERS, Philip K. Dick has yet to receive all the credit he deserves in Hollywood.

Daniel Gilbertson
Santa Monica, CA 90405

TARZAN JUNK

TARZAN: THE EPIC ADVENTURES [28:2] stinks of a poor HERCULES/XENA rip-off. It's right there in the title, for crying out loud. And if this is the route they plan on taking, it's going to be held up to those two and look like a poor imitation. It looked it from the photos. I noticed that the new Tarzan (Joe Lara) doesn't carry a knife, which makes me suspect the ol' PC monster. I also noticed him wearing boots. This was the same for the last television Tarzan. What's going on? Do these guys have ugly feet or are they just afraid to ding their precious toes? How many fine actors have preceded them and not done this?

I also have to comment on Dennis Steinmetz' remarks on how "...what we thought he [Burroughs] would want to do in our situation." In other words, he threw Burroughs' ideas right out the window for his own. I've heard all this stuff before. "We're going to follow Burroughs," "We're going to be loyal to the story." Yeah, right. I'll believe it when I see it, and from what I've already seen of TARZAN: THE EPIC ADVENTURES, it's going to be just like all the others—junk. Hopefully, it won't have a long life.

David Burton
Manchester, NH 03108

TREK'S DRAMATIC RADIO ROOTS

I violently disagreed with the "Star" ratings for the classic STAR TREK [27:11/12:26], which sometimes seemed almost perverse. They seemed to be driven by a feminist agenda and reminded me of a professor I had at the University of Toronto, who could not even deliver lectures on geography without turning them into Communist propaganda. It was particularly useful to have so many of the actors identified, but how could Sue Uram have failed to mention the wonderful performance by Logan Ramsey as the Proconsul in "Bread and Circuses," to my mind one of the outstanding bits of characterization in all of TREK.

It has often struck me as odd that, in all the millions of words that have been written about STAR TREK, no one has mentioned, to my knowledge, that three of the actors came out of the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation's "Stage" series of radio dramas—James Doohan, William Shatner and John Colicos (who created the characterization of a Klingon in "Errand of Mercy," which all others since have followed). This was a weekly series of hour-long dramas which combined the name with the year, i.e., Stage 47, Stage 48, Stage 49, etc. They were the best radio dramas I ever heard and I have heard radio drama from England and the U.S.—better than Norman Corwin, better than Arch Oboler.

R.R. Anger
Toronto, Ontario

MORE TREK CORRECTIONS

Thanks for the terrific July double issue on the 30th anniversary of STAR TREK [27:11/12]. The many inter-

views were great, and the rare photos and layout were top-notch as usual.

However, there were quite a few factual errors that even the most casual TREK fan would spot (don't you have even one editor who knows anything about this series?) For example: Page 31 (Mudd's Women sidebar) lists a Karen Stuhl instead of Steele; page 47: photo caption for "The Menagerie" says this is Spock's first Vulcan neck pinch scene. No, that would be "The Enemy Within." The same mistake is repeated on page 42 (Miri sidebar). A photo on page 48 describes Shatner, Nimoy and Whitney holding "phaser weapons." Take another look—they're flashing lights with colored lenses! (I had one of those lights in the '60s, too.) Pages 51 and 39 mention Majel Barrett in 1966-67 as Roddenberry's "new wife," but they weren't married until 1970—long after TREK was cancelled. And page 55 has a photo caption listing guest star Roger Perry, but the picture is of a bit-part actor who only had two lines. Dohh.

CFQ regularly puts out great issues on TREK, but I wish you had more Trek-savvy editors.

Jim Ivers
S. Norwalk, CT 06854

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THE BUBBLEGUM CARDS

continued from page 19

Topps in designing new cards rendered by Earl Worem in the tradition of the original series for the reissued set. "Gary carried the ball the rest of the way with the new card art for 1994," said Brown. "Actually the Earl Norem paintings were done a couple of years earlier, when we first thought we would do a 66 card series," said Brown.

The success of the reissued cards has led to a line of Topps' Mars Attacks! comic books, with Brown writing stories for the '94 mini-series. "The comic book seemed like a natural for Topps," said Brown. "While science-fiction may not have a great track record in comics, we felt 'Mars Attacks!' had enough of a cult following to make it work for us. I'm delighted to see it revived again this year. At Topps we believe and have proven that you don't have to be a super-hero comics publisher to be successful." □

ROD STEIGER

continued from page 21

the spirit of the cards they used to exchange like baseball cards. We hope it's more of a comic DR. STRANGELOVE. I just hope they leave it alone and don't re-edit it. By and large, very few directors in this town finish a film actually the way they want—which is a crime. But Burton does, because they don't know what he's going to do! And he's smart enough to do just what he needs." □

ART DIRECTION

continued from page 22

idea that that would be one of the ways that we would tie the look of the picture together. Each local has its own color palette, in a way, and sometimes the color palettes will be mixed among two or three of the worlds, but not across the board. The idea was to integrate color throughout the whole picture, with the hope that there would be a visual 'through line,' throughout the whole movie.

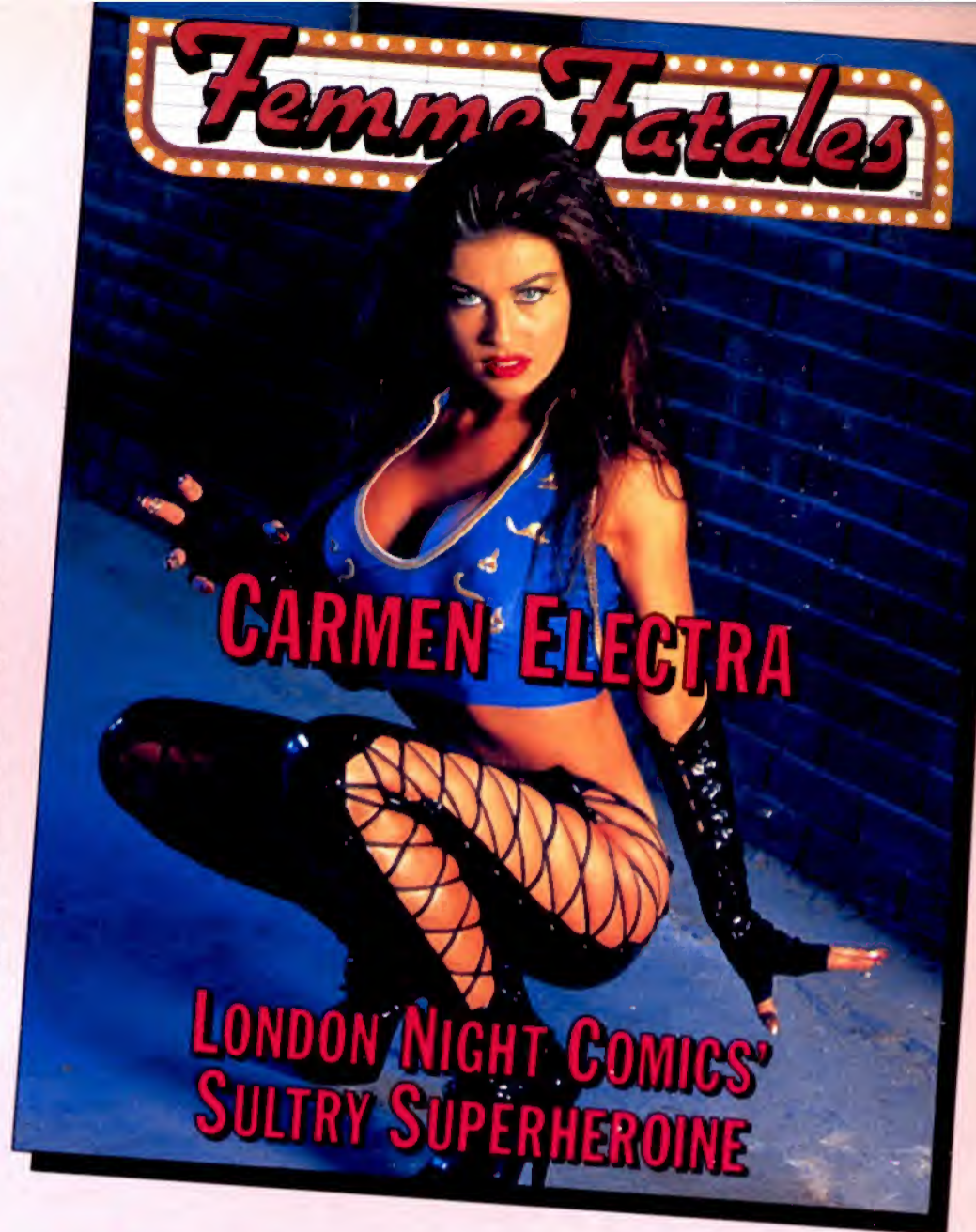
"That to me is still my biggest fear—tying the look of the picture together," concluded Thomas. "To this day I don't know whether all the elements belong in the same picture. I know the choices I made, and I know what I was hoping for. But that's something that you really don't see until you sit down and see the whole picture put together." □

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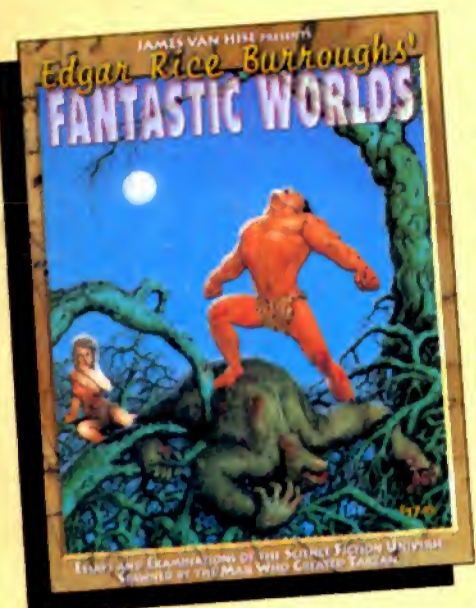


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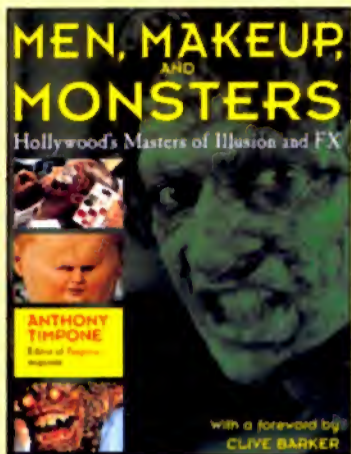
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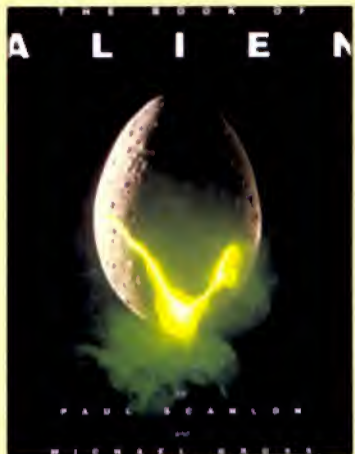
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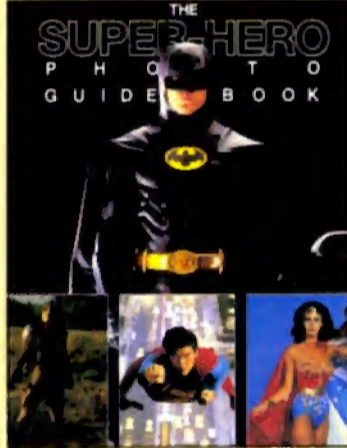
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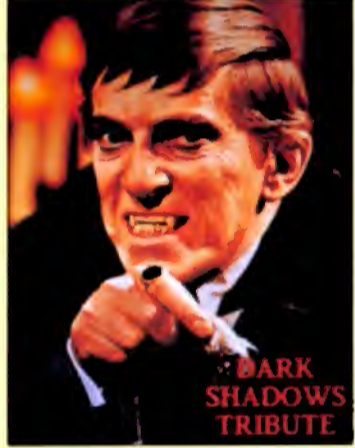
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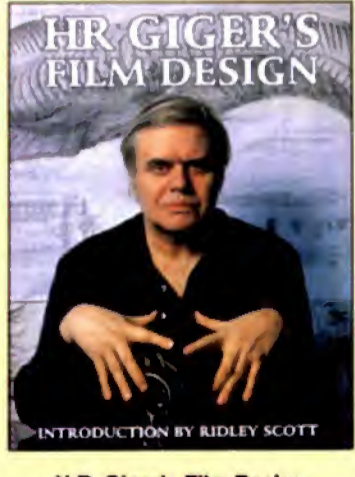
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